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THE WORLD CRISIS

THE WORLD CRISIS

1915

BY

THE RT. HON. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, C.H.

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY

1911 TO 1915

VOL. II

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TO

ALL WHO TRIED

'Even so was wisdom proven blind,
So courage failed, so strength was chained,
Even so the gods, whose seeing mind
Is not as ours, ordained.'

JOHN MASEFIELD:
'The Dardanelles.'

PREFACE TO THE SECOND VOLUME

IN the first volume of this Account I had a long and varied tale to tell: nor was it possible to avoid dealing with many episodes of peace and war necessarily exciting dispute. Still the broad and enduring results were crowned with success, and there was praise and honour for all concerned in their achievement. This second volume deals with a year of ill-fortune to the cause of the Allies. Brilliant opportunities presented themselves in vain; grave mistakes were made, and losses were incurred measureless in their pain. The assignment and the division of the responsibility for these events is a task at once difficult and invidious. Moreover I was for a time an actor exercising an influence or even an authority, sometimes decisive and often potent, upon the unfolding of the tragedy. I was brought by the convictions I held and the course I took into unyielding conflict with two of the most honoured and famous war-figures of our national life—Lord Fisher and Lord Kitchener. Both are now silent for ever. Yet my contention persists, nor could I without insincerity, without concealment, without a woeful surrender of the truth as I see it, fail to make that contention good.

I must therefore at the outset disclaim the position of the historian. It is not for me with my record and special point of view to pronounce a final conclusion. That must be left to others and to other times. But I intend to set forth what I believe to be fair and true; and I present it as a contribution to history of which note should be taken together with other accounts. I cannot expect to alter the fixed and prevailing opinions of this generation. They lived and fought their way through the awful struggle in the light of the knowledge given to them at the time, and their minds are

stamped with its imprint. All I ask is that this Account shall also be placed on record and shall survive as one of the factors upon which the judgment of our children will be founded.

It is absurd to argue that the facts should not be fully published, or that obligations of secrecy are violated by their disclosure in good faith. Thousands of facts have been made public and hundreds of secret matters exposed. A whole library, for instance, has sprung into existence in the last five years about the Dardanelles Campaign and the circumstances which led to it. All the principal actors have told their stories, and many minor ones. Lord Fisher has published two volumes in which may be read not only his official memoranda, but even the full record of his personal interventions in the secret discussion of the War Committee. Lord Kitchener's biographer has printed whatever documents he considered necessary to the case he was unfolding, including even extracts from my own Cabinet papers. Sir Ian Hamilton has published in the fullest detail his records and diaries. Major-General C. E. Callwell, Director of Military Operations at the time, has written what purports to be a history of the Dardanelles. The Official Naval Historian and the Official Historian of the Commonwealth of Australia, with access to every form of secret information, have traversed the whole ground, dealing with every episode and quoting or summarising every important order or telegram for which I am answerable, and all other confidential papers which they considered relevant. The Royal Commission on the Dardanelles has issued its lengthy and searching report. There are at least twenty other works of importance and repute in the English language alone, professing to deal authoritatively with the whole subject.

Upon me more than any other person the responsibility for the Dardanelles and all that it involved has been cast. Upon me fell almost exclusively the fierce war-time censures

of Press and Public. Upon me alone among the high authorities concerned was the penalty inflicted—not of loss of office, for that is a petty thing—but of interruption and deprivation of control while the fate of the enterprise was still in suspense. In these circumstances it is my intention to set forth the facts as they are known to me without bitterness, but without compunction, seeking no offence, but concealing no essential.

It is certainly not my purpose to shift or shirk my responsibility, or to set upon other shoulders burdens which are my own. On the contrary, as will be seen, I accept the fullest responsibility for all that I did and had the power to do. I take also my share for the unforeseeable consequences of these actions. But I wish to define and recount exactly what that share has been, and what those actions were, and to do this not in the easily turned language of the aftertime, but as far as possible in the actual operation orders and counsels given by me at the time and *before* the event.

Concerning the more general aspects of the war on which this volume touches, I am equally conscious of running counter to many established opinions, to the dominant military doctrines of those days, and to some extent to the naval performance. I cannot therefore expect to do more than submit the convictions by which I was actuated, and in which I still reside, to the consideration of my countrymen. I cannot ask them to share my views. I am content that they should know them. But here again I shall not use the light of after knowledge, but shall rest exclusively upon what was put on record in the stern days of war.

Documents written at the time and before the event are the only foundation upon which the judgment of history can be erected. They alone reveal the perplexities of the situation at the moment. They alone show how far it was understood. By their aid we can recall the light which then played over the immense battlefield with partial fleeting

gleams. We can revive again and try to gauge the pressures under which the men responsible lived, and from which action emerged. We can not only discern the points where judgment was right or wrong, but whether such judgment, right or wrong, was reasonable or even inevitable at the time and with the knowledge of the time. In laying bare the processes of thought upon this gigantic, obscure and uncertain war situation I expose myself to an ordeal to which, so far as I am aware, no responsible actor in these events has yet been subjected. Many suggestions or ideas will be found which later and fuller knowledge may discredit. There may be apparent changes of views and aims. There may be inconsistencies or contradictions. For all these the reader must make allowance, remembering how easy it would be to dress up a tale in the light of its results, and how hard it is to build it from authentic documents written while these results were lapped in the mysteries of the unknown future, while every fact was doubtful and disputable, while hazard intervened at every stage and even the most hard-wrought conclusion was little more than a guess.

I must in conclusion record my thanks to the numerous friends who have most kindly assisted me in the preparation of this account by placing material at my disposal or by checking and correcting the proofs, and in particular to Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Jackson who, as in the previous volume, has given me the benefit of his professional knowledge.

Winston S. Churchill

August 13, 1923.

ERRATA

Page 67, footnote 1, Appendix III, p. 561.
" 108, " 1, for Chapter XI read Chapter XIV.
" 122, " 1, for p. 60 read pp. 47–50.
" 151, " 1, for p. 149 read p. 146.
" 190, " 1, for p. 240 read p. 244.
" 246, " 1, for Chapter IX read Chapter X.

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CHAPTER I

THE DEADLOCK IN THE WEST

The Year 1915—Its Lost Opportunities—The Chain of Commanding Causation—The Continuous Front—Frontal Attacks—The War of Exhaustion—Slaughter or Manœuvre—No Clearing House of Ideas—The Mechanical Deadlock—Monitors and Tanks—Smoke—The Eastern Front—The Opening Battles—The Winter Campaign—Failure of the Russian Munitions—Impending Disasters—The Last Resource of Russia—Amphibious Solutions——The Northern Flank—The Southern Flank—The Flexibility of Sea Power—The Great Amphibian.

THE year 1915 was disastrous to the cause of the Allies and to the whole world. By the mistakes of this year the opportunity was lost of confining the conflagration within limits which though enormous were not uncontrolled. Thereafter the fire roared on till it burnt itself out. Thereafter events passed very largely outside the scope of conscious choice. Governments and individuals conformed to the rhythm of the tragedy, and swayed and staggered forward in helpless violence, slaughtering and squandering on ever-increasing scales, till injuries were wrought to the structure of human society which a century will not efface, and which may conceivably prove fatal to the present civilisation. But in January, 1915, the terrific affair was still not unmanageable. It could have been grasped in human hands and brought to rest in righteous and fruitful victory before the world was exhausted, before the nations were broken, before the empires were shattered to pieces, before Europe was ruined.

It was not to be. Mankind was not to escape so easily from the catastrophe in which it had involved itself. Pride was everywhere to be humbled, and nowhere to receive its satisfaction. No splendid harmony was to crown the wonderful achievements. No prize was to reward the sacrifices

of the combatants. Victory was to be bought so dear as to be almost indistinguishable from defeat. It was not to give even security to the victors. There never was to be 'The silence following great words of Peace.'[1] To the convulsions of the struggle must succeed the impotent turmoil of the aftermath. Noble hopes, high comradeship and glorious daring were in every nation to lead only to disappointment, disillusion and prostration. The sufferings and impoverishment of peoples might arrest their warfare, the collapse of the defeated might still the cannonade, but their hatreds continue unappeased and their quarrels are still unsettled. The most complete victory ever gained in arms has failed to solve the European problem or remove the dangers which produced the war.

Although this account pretends to deal only with a partial aspect of the immense theme, it will follow throughout, as I conceive, the pathway on which footsteps were decisive. In the vast tangle of arguments, here will be found the unravelling thread. In the clash, overbalancing or equipoise of gigantic forces, here were the determining factors. Amid increasing chaos, here lay the potential dominants. Much action and the play of forces even on a huge scale and with enormous material effects is often irrelevant, and counts for little or nothing in the final result: but along the chain of commanding causation even the smallest events are vital. It is these which should be studied and pondered over; for in them is revealed the profound significance of human choice and the sublime responsibility of men. No one can tell that he may not some day set a stone rolling or take or neglect some ordinary step which in its consequences will alter the history of the world.

* * * * *

When the old year closed a complete deadlock existed between the great combatants in the West by land and by sea.

[1] Rupert Brooke—his last and most pregnant line.

The German fleet remained sheltered in its fortified harbours, and the British Admiralty had discovered no way of drawing it out. The trench lines ran continuously from the Alps to the sea, and there was no possibility of manœuvre. The Admirals pinned their faith to the blockade; the Generals turned to a war of exhaustion and to still more dire attempts to pierce the enemy's front. All the wars of the world could show nothing to compare with the continuous front which had now been established. Ramparts more than 350 miles long, ceaselessly guarded by millions of men, sustained by thousands of cannon, stretched from the Swiss frontier to the North Sea. The Germans had tried in October and November to break through while these lines were still weak and thin. They had failed with heavy losses. The French and British Headquarters had still to be instructed in the defensive power of barbed wire and entrenched machine guns.

For more than forty years frontal attacks had been abandoned on account of the severity of modern fire. In the Franco-German War the great German victories had been won by wide turning movements executed on one flank or the other by considerable forces. In the Russo-Japanese War this method was invariably pursued by the victors. Thus at Liao-yang it was General Kuroki's army which turned the Russian left; and at Mukden General Nogi's army brought specially from Port Arthur turned the Russian right. It was certain that frontal attacks unaccompanied by turning movements on the flank would be extremely costly and would probably fail. But now, in France and Flanders for the first time in recorded experience there were no flanks to turn. The turning movement, the oldest manœuvre in war, became impossible. Neutral territory or salt water barred all further extension of the front, and the great armies lay glaring at each other at close quarters without any true idea of what to do next.

It was in these circumstances that the French High Com-

mand, carrying with them the British, turned again to the forlorn expedient of the frontal attack which had been discarded in the bitter experiences of the past. Meanwhile, the power of modern weapons had doubled and trebled since the Russo-Japanese War, and was increasing almost daily. Moreover, the use of barbed wire and the consequent need of prolonged bombardment to destroy it, effectually prevented any chance of surprise. There existed at this period no means of taking the offensive successfully in France: the centre could not be pierced, and there were no flanks to turn. Confronted with this deadlock, military art remained dumb; the Commanders and their General Staffs had no plan except the frontal attacks which all their experience and training had led them to reject; they had no policy except the policy of exhaustion.

No war is so sanguinary as the war of exhaustion. No plan could be more unpromising than the plan of frontal attack. Yet on these two brutal expedients the military authorities of France and Britain consumed, during three successive years, the flower of their national manhood. Moreover, the dull carnage of the policy of exhaustion did not even apply equally to the combatants. The Anglo-French offensives of 1915, 1916 and 1917 were in nearly every instance, and certainly in the aggregate, far more costly to the attack than to the German defence. It was not even a case of exchanging a life for a life. Two, and even three, British or French lives were repeatedly paid for the killing of one enemy, and grim calculations were made to prove that in the end the Allies would still have a balance of a few millions to spare. It will appear not only horrible but incredible to future generations that such doctrines should have been imposed by the military profession upon the ardent and heroic populations who yielded themselves to their orders.

It is a tale of the torture, mutilation or extinction of millions of men, and of the sacrifice of all that was best and noblest in

an entire generation. The crippled, broken world in which we dwell to-day is the inheritor of these awful events. Yet all the time there were ways open by which this slaughter could have been avoided and the period of torment curtailed. There were regions where flanks could have been turned; there were devices by which fronts could have been pierced. And these could have been discovered and made mercifully effective, not by any departure from the principles of military art, but simply by the true comprehension of those principles and their application to the actual facts.

* * * * *

Battles are won by slaughter and manœuvre. The greater the general, the more he contributes in manœuvre, the less he demands in slaughter. The theory which has exalted the 'bataille d'usure' or 'battle of wearing down' into a foremost position, is contradicted by history and would be repulsed by the greatest captains of the past. Nearly all the battles which are regarded as masterpieces of the military art, from which have been derived the foundation of states and the fame of commanders, have been battles of manœuvre in which very often the enemy has found himself defeated by some novel expedient or device, some queer, swift, unexpected thrust or stratagem. In many such battles the losses of the victors have been small. There is required for the composition of a great commander not only massive common sense and reasoning power, not only imagination, but also an element of legerdemain, an original and sinister touch, which leaves the enemy puzzled as well as beaten. It is because military leaders are credited with gifts of this order which enable them to ensure victory and save slaughter that their profession is held in such high honour. For if their art were nothing more than a dreary process of exchanging lives, and counting heads at the end, they would rank much lower in the scale of human esteem.

* * * * *

There are many kinds of manœuvres in war, some only of which take place upon the battlefield. There are manœuvres far to the flank or rear. There are manœuvres in time, in diplomacy, in mechanics, in psychology; all of which are removed from the battlefield, but react often decisively upon it, and the object of all is to find easier ways, other than sheer slaughter, of achieving the main purpose. The distinction between politics and strategy diminishes as the point of view is raised. At the summit true politics and strategy are one. The manœuvre which brings an ally into the field is as serviceable as that which wins a great battle. The manœuvre which gains an important strategic point may be less valuable than that which placates or overawes a dangerous neutral. We suffered grievously at the beginning of the war from the want of a common clearing house where these different relative values could be established and exchanged. A single prolonged conference between the allied chiefs, civil and martial, in January, 1915, might have saved us from inestimable misfortune. Nothing could ever be thrashed out by correspondence. Principals must be brought together, and plans concerted in common. Instead each allied state pursued in the main its own course, keeping the others more or less informed. The armies and navies dwelt in every country in separate compartments. The war problem, which was all one, was tugged at from many different and disconnected standpoints. War, which knows no rigid divisions between French, Russian and British Allies, between Land, Sea and Air, between gaining victories and alliances, between supplies and fighting men, between propaganda and machinery, which is, in fact, simply the sum of all forces and pressures operative at a given period, was dealt with piecemeal. And years of cruel teaching were necessary before even imperfect unifications of study, thought, command and action were achieved. The men of the Beginning must not be judged wholly by the light of the End. All had to learn and all had to suffer. But

it was not those who learned the slowest who were made to suffer most.

* * * * *

Mechanical not less than strategic conditions had combined to produce at this early period in the war a deadlock both on sea and land. The strongest fleet was paralysed in its offensive by the menace of the mine and the torpedo. The strongest army was arrested in its advance by the machine gun. On getting into certain positions necessary for offensive action, ships were sunk by under-water explosions, and soldiers were cut down by streams of bullets. This was the evil which lay at the root of all our perplexities. It was no use endeavouring to remedy this evil on sea by keeping the ships in harbour, or on land by squandering the lives and valour of endless masses of men. The mechanical danger must be overcome by a mechanical remedy. Once this was done, both the stronger fleet and the stronger armies would regain their normal offensive rights. Until this were done, both would be baffled and all would suffer. If we master the fact that this was the crux of the war problem, as it was plainly apparent from the end of 1914 onward, the next steps in thought will be found equally simple. Something must be discovered which would render ships immune from the torpedo, and make it unnecessary for soldiers to bare their breasts to the machine-gun hail. This very definite evil and ugly fact that a torpedo or mine would blow a hole in the bottom of a ship, and that any one bullet out of countless streams discharged by machinery would fatally pierce the body of a man, was not one which could be ignored. It must be conquered if the war was to progress and victory to be won. The remedy when stated appeared to be so simple that it was for months or even years scouted and disregarded by many of the leading men in both the great fighting professions.

Reduced to its rudiments, it consisted in interposing a thin plate of steel between the side of the ship and the approaching

torpedo, or between the body of a man and the approaching bullet.

Here then was one of the great secrets of the war and of the world in 1915. But hardly anyone would believe it. This sovereign, priceless key to inestimable blessings lay there in the dust for every one to see, and almost all the great responsible authorities stood gazing at it with vacant eyes. Those who perceived it, soldiers, sailors, airmen, civilians, were a class apart, outside the currents of orthodox opinion, and for them was reserved the long and thankless struggle to convert authority and to procure action. Eventually they succeeded. On sea authority intervened at an early stage : on land the process was more painful. The Monitor and the 'bulged' or 'blistered ship' were the beginning of the torpedo-proof fleet, the Tank was the beginning of the bullet-proof army. Both of these devices, when the difficulties of their application were surmounted, would have restored to the stronger fleet or army the offensive powers of which they had been deprived by new mechanical developments. But when at last Monitors, 'Blisters' and Tanks had been devised and built and were placed under Naval and Military Commanders-in-Chief, the usefulness of both was largely thrown away. The Monitors—the original types of which were no doubt far from perfect—were not developed, and were never employed as a part of any great naval offensive, while the Tanks were improvidently exposed to the enemy long before they were numerous enough to produce decisive effects. Nevertheless the Tanks survived to play their part.

Closely allied to the problem of finding ways of attacking by sea and land lay the great subject of Smoke. To make an artificial fog which would blanket off a particular area so that men or ships could traverse it or occupy it without the enemy seeing where to shoot at them, was a second most simple and obvious expedient. Smoke was the ally and comrade of the Steel Plate. They went forward together each helping the other and multiplying their joint effect.

And behind smoke lay a more baleful development—Poisonous Smoke : smoke that would not only obstruct the vision but destroy the eye, smoke that would not only blindfold the machine gunner but strangle him.

All these ideas had already dawned before the year 1914 was over.

* * * * *

But if a complete deadlock had been reached in the West, events were moving with imperious violence in the East. These events justify a brief retrogression in the narrative.

When, in August, 1914, it was seen that the Germans were concentrating practically four-fifths of their armies against France and leaving only a handful of Divisions to guard their eastern frontiers against Russia, high hopes were entertained that these slender forces would be overwhelmed or forced to retreat, and that Germany would be invaded continuously from the east. In the darkest moments before the Marne, when it was necessary to contemplate the loss of Paris and a resistance desperately maintained along the Loire, we had comforted ourselves with the belief that the Russian masses would be rolling forward upon Dantzig, upon Breslau, onward into the heart of the German Empire. We counted on this increasing pressure from the East to retrieve the situation in the West, and to force the Germans to recall their invading armies to the defence of their own soil. We have seen how the loyal conduct of the Czar and the ardour of the Russian armies and nation had precipitated a rapid offensive into East Prussia within a fortnight of the outbreak of war. We know that the effects of this offensive upon the nerves of the German Headquarters Staff had led to the withdrawal of two Army Corps from the German right in Belgium during the crisis before the Marne. It may well be argued that this event was decisive upon the fate of the battle. And if this be true, homage will be rendered to the

Czar and his soldiers long after this ingrate generation has passed away.

But, for this supreme achievement Russia had paid a fearful price. No sooner were the armies in contact in the East than the bravery and superior numbers of the Russians were found quite unequal to the leadership, the science and the discipline of Germany. The twenty cavalry and infantry divisions which formed the Army of Rennenkampf, the fifteen divisions of Samsonoff, were confronted by fourteen German divisions, and at the head of this small but resolute and trustworthy army stood the rugged Hindenburg and a Major General fresh from the capture of Liège whose name, till then unknown, will rank with the great Commanders of the past. In the frightful battles of Tannenberg (August 25–31) and of the Masurian Lakes (September 5–15) the Army of Samsonoff was cut to pieces with the slaughter and capture of 100,000 men, and the Army of Rennenkampf decisively defeated. The audacious combinations whereby Hindenburg and Ludendorff overwhelmed within little more than a fortnight two armies, each of which was stronger than their own, have appeared so astonishing that treachery has been invoked as the only possible explanation. History, however, will dwell upon the results, and it was with these that we were con-confronted.

The Russian armies, which even in their first vigour and when fully equipped were no match for the Germans, showed themselves on the whole superior to the variegated forces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the defeats of Tannenberg and of the Masurian Lakes were endured by Russia in the North, her armies pressed forward into Galicia, and in a series of tumultuous struggles over a great expanse of ground gained a substantial victory in what has been called the Battle of Lemberg. This event covered, masked and partially counter-balanced the disasters in the North. In fact the victory in Galicia bulked so largely in the accounts published in

France and Britain, that the catastrophe in East Prussia made little or no impression. Hindenburg and Ludendorff now laid hands upon the defeated Austrians and proceeded to reinforce and re-organise their front. There followed the winter war in the East. In the snow or mud of Poland and Galicia, over enormous fronts swaying backward and forward with varying fortunes, the Russians grappled manfully with their antagonists. The German situation in France after the Battle of the Marne, and the great drive in October and November against the Channel ports, forbade the withdrawal from the West of reinforcements for the East. Ludendorff's first combined movement against Warsaw, conceived with his usual hardihood, proved a task beyond his strength. The Grand Duke Nicholas stubbornly and skilfully withstood him, and the advancing German armies were forced to recoil amid the indescribable conditions of a Polish winter. Yet here again the trustworthy qualities of the German troops and leadership were displayed, and more than once, nearly surrounded by superior numbers, they cut their way out and fought their way back with discipline and determination. Against Austria, Russia continued to make headway. In November, 1914, the Grand Duke could still contemplate an advance through Silesia into the heart of Germany.

But thereafter came an awful change. Russia had entered the war with about 5,000 guns and 5,000,000 shells. During the first three months of fighting she fired on an average about *45,000 shells a day*. The output of her factories in Russia did not exceed *35,000 shells a month*. By the beginning of December, 1914, scarcely 300,000 shells, or barely a week's requirement, remained out of the initial reserve. At the moment when the Russian armies needed the greatest support from their artillery, they found their guns suddenly frozen into silence. No less grim was the shortage of rifles. In the fierce, confused, unceasing fighting of the first three months over 1,000,000 rifles out of five and a half millions had been lost,

captured or destroyed. By the end of the year over 1,350,000 Russians had been killed, wounded or made prisoners. The Barracks of the Empire were full of lusty manhood. 800,000 trained drafts were ready for despatch to the front, but there were no weapons to place in their hands. Every Russian battery was silenced; every Russian battalion was depleted to two-thirds its strength. Many months must elapse before the flow of shells could be resumed; many more months, before the supplies of rifles could overtake the daily wastage. Meanwhile, the Russian armies, hamstrung and paralysed, must await and endure the vengeance of their foes. Such was the prospect which opened upon Russia and her Allies before the first Christmas of the war was reached.

The British Government had at the Russian Headquarters an agent of singular discernment in Colonel Knox. All the facts set out above were unearthed and reported by this officer during November and December. General Sukhomlinoff, the Minister of War, might persist in blind or guilty optimism; the General Staff in Petrograd might declare in answer to the anxious enquiries of General Joffre at the end of September that 'the rate of expenditure of ammunition gave no cause for anxiety'; the Grand Duke himself, absorbed in the actual operations, might be unconscious that the ground was crumbling under his feet; but the terrifying secrets of the Russian administration were penetrated by the remorseless scrutiny of Knox. In a series of luminous and pitiless despatches he exposed the position to the British Government, and these grave forbodings lay upon us during the closing weeks of 1914.

It seemed at times that Russia might be torn in pieces before she could be re-armed. While the deadlock continued on the Western Front, while Joffre pursued the policy of 'nibbling'—'*Je les grignote*'—and his staff elaborated schemes for a frontal attack on the German lines in the spring, Russia, with her inexhaustible resources in men and food, might collapse altogether or be forced into a separate peace. And

then the whole weight of the Teutonic powers would fall after an interval upon the hard-pressed armies of France and the unready armies of Britain. At the best a long period of weakness, of quiescence and of retirement, must be expected from our great Ally.

No one could measure the disasters which this period must contain. Although in appearance the lines in the East presented a continuous front, they in no way reproduced the conditions of the West. The distances were much greater, the communications much worse. The lines were thinly held on both sides ; they could be bulged or broken by any decided advance. How could the Russians maintain their front with hardly any artillery fire, with very few machine guns, and with an increasing scarcity of rifles? Moreover, the Turkish attack on Russia had compelled her in November, at the very moment when the worst facts of her position were becoming apparent and munitions of all kinds were failing, to create and to develop a new front in the Caucasus against the advancing Ottoman armies.

Russia had, however, one last supreme resource—territory. The enormous size of the country afforded almost unlimited possibilities of retirement ; and judicious and timely retirement might secure the vital breathing space. Once again, as in 1812, the Russian armies might withdraw intact into the heart of their Empire, all the time holding on their front large numbers of the enemy. Once again the invaders might be lured into the vast expanses of Russia. And meanwhile the factories of the world could be set to work to supply and re-equip the Russian armies. The situation, though tragic, was not necessarily fatal. If only the will power of Russia did not fail in the ordeal that lay before her, if she could be encouraged to dwell upon the prizes of victory, if intimate and continuous contact could be established between her and the Western Allies, there was no reason why her strength should not be restored before the end of 1915.

It is on this basis that the strategy and policy of 1915 can alone be studied.

* * * * *

The essence of the war problem was not changed by its enormous scale. The line of the Central Powers from the North Sea to the Ægean and stretching loosely beyond even to the Suez Canal was, after all, in principle not different from the line of a small army entrenched across an isthmus, with each flank resting upon water. As long as France was treated as a self-contained theatre, a complete deadlock existed, and the front of the German invaders could neither be pierced nor turned. But once the view was extended to the whole scene of the war, and that vast war conceived as if it were a single battle, and once the sea power of Britain was brought into play, turning movements of a most far-reaching character were open to the Allies. These turning movements were so gigantic and complex that they amounted to whole wars in themselves. They required armies which in any other war would have been considered large. They rested on sea power, and they demanded a complete diplomacy of their own.

At the very moment when the French High Command was complaining that there were no flanks to turn, the Teutonic Empires were in fact vulnerable in an extreme degree on either flank. Thus the three salient facts of the war situation at the beginning of 1915 were: first, the deadlock in France, the main and central theatre; secondly, the urgent need of relieving that deadlock before Russia was overwhelmed; and thirdly, the possibility of relieving it by great amphibious and political-strategic operations on either flank.

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Let us, at this point, cast a preliminary glance upon each of the flanks of the battle line.

On the Northern flank lay a group of small but virile and cultivated peoples. All were under the impression of the

German power, and connected with Germany by many ties: but all were acutely conscious that the victory of Germany would reduce them to a state of subservience to the conqueror; and all trembled at the fate which had overtaken Belgium. Holland, mobilised and heavily armed, stood on anxious guard of her frontiers. Denmark, through whose territory passed the gateway of the Baltic, was practically defenceless. Norway and Sweden were under the apprehension of Russia not less than of Germany. It would have been wrong to embroil any of these Powers without being able to defend them by sea and land, and to combine their forces. Had it been possible to achieve this, the position of Germany would have become desperate. The Dutch Army was a substantial factor. The Dutch islands offered invaluable strategic advantages to the British Navy. Denmark could open the door of the Baltic to a British fleet; and the command of the Baltic by the Allies would have afforded a means of direct contact with Russia. This would have rendered the blockade absolute, and would have exposed all Northern Germany to the constant menace of Russian invasion by sea.

Even more remarkable was the aspect of the Southern Flank. Here Serbia, by heroic exertions, had twice repelled the Austrian invaders. Here a weak, divided, and ill-organised Turkey had lately declared war upon the Allies. Three of the warlike States of the Balkan Peninsula, namely Greece, Serbia, and Roumania were divided from the fourth, Bulgaria, by the hatreds of their recent war; but all four were the natural enemies both of Turkey and of Austria and the traditional friends of Britain. Between them these four Powers disposed of organised armies which amounted to 1,100,000 men (Serbia 250,000, Greece 200,000, Bulgaria 300,000, Roumania 350,000); and their total military manpower was of course greater still. They had freed themselves from the Turks after centuries of oppression. They could only expand at the expense of Austria and Turkey. Serbia was already fighting for her life against Austria ; Roumania

coveted Transylvania from Austria-Hungary. Bulgaria looked hungrily to Adrianople, to the Enos-Midia line, and, indeed, to Constantinople itself; while Greece saw great numbers of her citizens still held down under the Turkish yoke and several of the fairest provinces and islands of the Turkish Empire mainly inhabited by men of Greek blood. If these four States could be induced to lay aside their intestine quarrels and enter the war together under British guidance against Turkey and Austria, the speedy downfall of the Turk was certain. Turkey would be cut off completely from her allies and forced into a separate peace during 1915. The whole of the forces of the Balkan confederation could then have been directed against the under side of Austria in the following year. If we may consider the fighting forces of the Turkish Empire as the equivalent of 700,000 men, it will be seen that the striking out of this hostile factor, and the simultaneous accession to our strength of new Balkan armies of nearly 1,000,000 men, meant an improvement of our position as against Germany and Austria by one and three-quarter million soldiers. We should have 700,000 soldiers less against us and 1,000,000 more soldiers on our side. The possibility of effecting such a transference of fighting strength was surely a military object of first consequence.

But it was also certain that the rally of the Balkans and the attack upon Turkey could not leave Italy indifferent. Italy was known to be profoundly friendly to the Allied cause, and particularly to Great Britain. She was the hereditary enemy of Austria. She had immense interests in the Balkan Peninsula, in the Turkish Empire, and in the Turkish islands. It seemed highly probable that any decisive or successful action taken by Great Britain in this quarter of the world must draw Italy, with her army of about two millions, directly into the ambit of the Great War as a first-class Ally on our side.

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The success of amphibious descents or invasions depends upon whether forces superior to the defender can be carried to the spot in time, and whether these can be continually reinforced more quickly than the enemy. In this the defenders are at a grave disadvantage. Even after the expedition has put to sea, no one can tell for certain where the descent will be made. Although the Central Powers were working on interior lines, this advantage did not countervail the superior mobility of sea power. Britain could at any time in 1915, for instance, have moved 250,000 men (if they had been available) to suitable points on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean in a fraction of the time required to send an equal number of Germans or Austrians. Moreover, the selection of these points would remain a mystery to the enemy up to the last minute. He would no doubt learn that the expedition was preparing, and that transports had assembled. But whether they would go North or South could not be known till after they had put to sea. Against such uncertainties it was impossible to prepare with precision beforehand. The amphibious assailants could have plans prepared for either alternative, and need not decide till the last moment which to use. They might pretend to be going North, and then go South. They might change their minds at the last moment. They might practise every feint and deception known to war. If, therefore, the defenders had reinforced their Northern flank, that would be a reason for attacking the Southern, and conversely. Thus the defence must wait till it was actually struck before knowing what to do. Then and then only could the transportation of armies to the scene begin. Even if the road were open—on the Southern flank it was not—the movement of considerable armies and their supplies, and their organisation in a new theatre was a matter of months. What could not the sea invaders achieve in the interval? What territory could they overrun? What positions could they seize? What defences could they construct? What magazines could they

accumulate? What local forces could they defeat or destroy? What allies could they gain? All this lay in our choice in the spring and summer of 1915.

As the war advanced the chances constantly diminished, and the difficulties constantly grew. In the later periods of the war the scale of the armies necessary to secure swift victory in the Southern theatre began to exceed the resources, strained in so many ways, of the British Mercantile Marine. There were limits even to the sea power of the Great Amphibian. Gradually under ever-increasing burdens and continual attack and injury these limits became apparent. But 1915 was her hour of overwhelming strength. There lay the supreme opportunity.

There were, in fact, at this juncture, two great plans of using sea power to relieve the murderous deadlock in the West. Both aimed at breaking into and dominating the land-locked waters which guarded the Teutonic flanks. Both would give direct contact with Russia and would rescue our Eastern Ally from her deadly isolation. Both would affect in a decisive manner a group of neutral States. Both in proportion, as they succeeded, would open up enormous new drains on the resources of the Teutonic Empires. Should we look to Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, or to Greece, Bulgaria, and Roumania? Should we strike through the Belts at the Baltic, or through the Dardanelles at Constantinople and the Black Sea?

CHAPTER II

THE SEARCH FOR A NAVAL OFFENSIVE

The Deadlock at Sea—Insincere German Criticisms—How to Force a Naval Battle—Bankruptcy of Naval Opinion—The Entry of the Baltic—Correspondence with the Russian Government—Lord Fisher's Views—The Island of Borkum—Difficulties and Lethargy—Efforts to Devise Practical Plans—The Bombarding Squadron—My Letter of December 29 to the Prime Minister—The Southern Alternative—Turkey and the Balkans—First Thoughts about the Dardanelles—The Imprudence of Passivity—Some Practical Propositions.

GERMAN naval chroniclers are accustomed to dwell in biting terms upon the failure of the British Fleet to attack them at the beginning of the war. They describe the martial ardour which inspired the German Navy, and their constant and instant expectation of battle. Admiral Scheer relates how as early as August 2, 1914, his colleague commanding the 1st German Squadron urged him to come through the Kiel Canal that very night to join the rest of the Fleet at Wilhelmshaven lest if he waited till daylight he should be too late. He describes the feverish energy with which every scrap of woodwork and paint was stripped from the interiors of German ships the better to prepare them for action. He professes astonishment, not unmingled with derision, that the British disappointed his hope. Considering that the German Fleet remained for the first four months of the war absolutely motionless in its strongly fortified river mouths and harbours protected by its minefields and its submarines, this attitude of mind on the part of a skilful sailor appears to be somewhat forced.

If the Germans really believed that the Grand Fleet would be sent through their minefields to give them battle in their

war harbours, they must have rated our intelligence very low. Such a course could only have cast away the British Fleet and achieved our ruin in a few hours. Nor would empty demonstrations off Heligoland, Sylt or Borkum have achieved any useful object. Both Scheer and Tirpitz write as if we had only to appear off these islands to compel the German High Seas Fleet to put to sea for the decisive battle. Yet at the same time we are told that the orders to the German Navy were not to fight a general battle until the British Fleet had been worn down by minor losses to a condition of equality. Why then should the Germans come out and fight a battle at heavy odds because British warships were exchanging shells with the batteries on the German islands? A much more sensible course for the Germans would be to send submarines by day and destroyers by night to torpedo the demonstrators and to sow the area with mines in case they should return. In this way the German equalisation policy would have had a very good chance; and one can believe that such action by the British Fleet would have been very agreeable to German wishes. What more, indeed, could they want than that the British Fleet should be swiftly worn down in patrolling boastfully and idiotically outside the German harbours?

We also were anxious for a battle; but not a fool's battle, or even an equal battle. It was our duty to take the fullest advantage of our superiority, and to fight only under conditions which gave solid assurances of victory. Moreover, while the Germans lay in harbour we had secured and were enjoying the full command of the sea. On the outbreak of war the British Fleet, from its war station at Scapa Flow, cut Germany off from the rest of the world. This was in itself an offensive act of prime intensity. It was for the Germans to prevent it if they dared and if they could. We had to convoy our Army to France and collect our forces from all parts of the British Empire. These armies were being sent to the decisive battle front on land. To hinder this transportation

was surely a highly important strategic object for Germany and her Navy. If the British Army could have been prevented from reaching its station on the French left, who shall say whether the war might not have ended at the Battle of the Marne? Yet the German Navy, with the formal and explicit assent of the German General Staff, remained inert, impassive behind its minefields and fortifications, while the whole business of the world and of the war proceeded under British authority on the high seas.

'If you are a great general,' said Pompaedius Silo to Marius, 'come down and fight.' 'If you are a great general,' was the famous answer, 'make me fight against my will.' This was, in fact, the problem with which the Admiralty was nakedly confronted once the first phase of the naval war was over. The obvious forms of naval offensive open to the British Fleet were attempts and measures to draw the enemy's fleet out of their harbours and force them to accept battle. The distant blockade, apart from its own immense influence upon the war, was a provocation to the enemy of the highest order. Another constant provocation was the ceaseless flow of troops and supplies to France. So important indeed were these functions of the Royal Navy, and so direct and insistent their challenge to the German Fleet, that the prevailing Admiralty view throughout the war rested content with them and did not wish for anything more. Once the first phase of the naval war was over and the outer seas were cleared, this strategy cannot be regarded as wholly sufficing. Without risking the Grand Fleet otherwise than in a battle upon favourable conditions, every device and form of pressure to make the enemy come out and bring on a naval crisis and climax ought to have been perseveringly studied. If the enemy would not come out to break the blockade, some other effective provocation should be sought for, and sought for with ceaseless diligence and audacity of conception. The Admirals in command and the prevailing authorities at the Admiralty, however, rested

content with their distant blockade and their protection of the lines of communication. They endeavoured to gather as many ships as possible, adding squadron to squadron and flotilla to flotilla, and then thought they had done all that could be expected of them. When reproached from time to time for their inactivity, they replied by using all the perfectly correct arguments about not jeopardising the Grand Fleet.

But this was not for them the end of the story. It was their business to invent or discover some offensive plan which without engaging the Grand Fleet at a disadvantage either forced the Germans to give battle or helped the allied armies in some notable way and took some of the pressure off them. A civilian Minister could never compel them to such a course. He could suggest, encourage and sustain. But if they remained immovable, like George II at the Battle of Dettingen '*sans peur et sans avis*,' nothing could be done.

What then would draw the German Fleet from its harbours with the intention of battle? The blockade had not provoked them; the passage of the Army did not tempt them; idle demonstrations off the German islands ought not to have enticed them. Something must be discovered and done which when done would immediately be insupportable to Germany, which she could by no means sit still and endure; something so urgent, so clamant, so deadly that whatever the odds her whole fleet must be at once engaged. Military history shows many examples of Commanders marching swiftly into an enemy's country and seizing some key position of defensive strength against which the enemy is afterwards forced to dash himself. Thus are combined the advantages of a strategic offensive with those of a tactical defensive. This situation reproduced itself to a very large extent in France during the Great War, where the invading German stood on the defensive and the invaded Frenchman had to expend his manhood assaulting wire and machine guns. How could such

simple military conceptions be applied to a naval war? What was there that we could do which would force the German Navy to fight us at our own selected moment and on our own terms? Surely such a study should have commanded a first place in British naval thought.

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On August 19, 1914, I had, with the consent of the Prime Minister, entered into communication with the Russian Government with the object of directing attention continuously upon the strategic aspects of the Baltic.

Mr. Churchill to the Grand Duke Nicholas (through the Russian Military and Naval Attachés in London).

The Kiel Canal gives the Germans the power of putting their whole naval force either in the North Sea or the Baltic. The British naval strength is not sufficient to provide two Fleets each individually superior to the German Fleet.

The British Admiralty cannot therefore obtain the naval command of the Baltic until either (A) a decisive general battle has been won at sea or (B) the Kiel Canal has been effectively blocked. (A) depends on the enemy's movements, but might happen any day. (B) is a difficult enterprise which might be attempted either by aerial or destroyer attack, or both, on the Brunsbüttel lock-gates. At the right moment (B) may be tried.

But it is important that plans should be prepared *now* to make the best use of our getting the command of the Baltic through either (A) or (B): and we desire the Russian General Staff to tell us what military use they would think it worth while to make of that command assuming we were able to get it.

The operation of sending a British Fleet through the Belts to enter the Baltic is feasible, and, if the main strategic situation were satisfactory, could be achieved.

Transports to carry a large invading army could be supplied at any time from England.

It would be possible if we had the command of the Baltic to land a Russian army in order :—

(1) To turn the flank and rear of German armies holding

the Dantzig-Thorn line, or which were elsewhere resisting the main Russian attack.

(2) To attack Berlin from the North—only 90 miles in the direct line.

(3) To attack Kiel and the Canal in force and to drive the German Fleet to sea.

All or any of these operations would have to be carried out by the Russian Army; but if either (A) or (B) condition were fulfilled, the British Admiralty could carry, convoy, and land the necessary force.

We desire a full statement of Russian views on these alternative operations, which would be of course contingent on (A) or (B) being satisfied.

The following reply was returned on August 24:—

Absolutely Secret.

In reply to the absolutely secret suggestions of the First Lord of the Admiralty, reported by you on the 6/19 August, the Chief of the Staff of His Imperial Highness the Commander-in-Chief commands you to transmit to Mr. Winston Churchill the following answer:—

We appreciate in the highest degree the First Lord's offer to co-operate with us in the execution by our land forces of a landing operation on the North German Coast, should the British Fleet gain command of the Baltic Sea. The attainment of the aforesaid command would, in our opinion, in itself prove a most valuable and desirable factor towards the development of our offensive operations against Germany. We consider that the suggested landing operation, under favourable circumstances, would be quite feasible and fully expedient. We therefore gratefully accept in principle the First Lord's offer, but we add that we could avail ourselves thereof only should the general military situation lend itself to its application.

These ideas received a powerful impetus from the arrival at the Admiralty, three months later, of Lord Fisher. The First Sea Lord was deeply convinced that the command of the Baltic, and the consequent letting loose of the Russian armies upon the whole of the unprotected Northern seaboard of Ger-

many, would be a mortal blow. In a weighty memorandum, which has since been published, he stated his case with sure insight. It was undoubtedly the prime goal of a naval offensive. When I showed him my correspondence with the Russian Government on this subject, he rallied enthusiastically to the idea. I told the War Council in his presence during our December discussions, in words which he often afterwards referred to, that there were three phases in the naval war. 'First, the clearance of the outer seas; second, the blocking in of the German Fleet ; and third, the entry of the Baltic.' But all this was a good deal easier said than done. The second stage stood in the way of the third, and until that was achieved the third could not begin. The second stage was in itself an operation of even greater consequence and hazard than the one that lay beyond. In order to close up the Heligoland Bight it was necessary to storm and hold one or more of the German islands, and this would in all probability have brought about the decisive sea battle between the British and German Fleets. It was really very difficult to see beyond such an event. Indeed, it was the biggest naval event that could possibly happen. The difficulties of this preliminary decisive stage were such that the Admiralty throughout the whole war, even when possessed of the most enormous superiority of strength, recoiled from facing it.

Let us see what exactly was this prime operation which stood in the path of all the rest.

In my earliest meetings with Lord Fisher in 1907 he had explained to me that the Admiralty plans at that date in the event of hostilities with Germany were for the seizure as early as possible in the war of the island of Borkum as an advanced base for all our flotillas and inshore squadrons blockading the German river mouths. I was always deeply interested in this view. I found it strongly held by Admiral Lewis Bayly. In 1913, this officer, who stood in the very first rank of the younger Admirals of the Navy, had been employed on exam-

ining the methods by which the capture and maintenance of this island could be effected in the event of a war, and how the problem had been influenced in the meanwhile by new conditions. The new elements were formidable: to wit, aviation, the submarine and the long-range gun. But they favoured or hindered both sides in various degrees at the different stages of the operation. As an alternative, or possibly as an accompaniment, the island of Sylt was also studied. Very careful models in relief were made of the German river mouths and of all the islands. Admiral Bayly's reports and plans were available in the staff archives. There was no possibility of using them at the beginning of the war. At least three or four brigades of the finest regular infantry we possessed were required for the storm of an island, though a smaller force would have sufficed to garrison it after it was taken. There was no possibility of sparing these troops from the decisive battle front in France. Moreover, as has been seen, the Navy had plenty to do on the outbreak of the war in securing the command of the sea and in ferrying the Army across.

In principle the plans were favoured by Prince Louis. Sir Arthur Wilson thought the operation feasible, and in his first views of the naval war was even disposed to the much more hazardous and much less fruitful enterprise of bombarding and storming Heligoland.[1] Lord Fisher, when he arrived at the Admiralty, was still favourable in principle to the attack on Borkum, but like every one else he realised the momentous character and consequences of such an operation. They could hardly have been less than the immediate bringing on of the supreme battle. Within a week at the latest of the island being in our possession, much more probably while the operation of landing was still in progress, the whole German Navy

[1] Sir John Jellicoe in his book, 'The Grand Fleet,' erroneously attributes this idea to me. I was never its advocate, but merely placed Sir Arthur Wilson's opinions before the Commander-in-Chief and his officers, and invited their comments.

must have come out to defend the Fatherland from this deadly strategic thrust. It was essentially one of those great projects to be prepared in absolute secrecy and in perfect detail, and to be used only when the circumstances warranted the taking of the great resolve. Lord Fisher and I in full agreement directed the War Staff in November to review Admiral Bayly's plans for the oversea offensive with a view to action at some period in 1915, and on January 7 I obtained, with his support, the provisional approval of the War Council to this operation in principle if and when circumstances should render it desirable.

But although the First Sea Lord's strategic conceptions were centred in the entry of the Baltic, and although he was in principle favourable to the seizure of Borkum as a preliminary, I did not find in him that practical, constructive and devising energy which in other periods of his career and at this period on other subjects he had so abundantly shown. I do not think he ever saw his way clearly through the great decisive and hazardous steps which were necessary for the success of the operation. He spoke a great deal about Borkum, its importance and its difficulties; but he did not give that strong professional impulsion to the staffs necessary to secure the thorough exploration of the plan. Instead, he talked in general terms about making the North Sea impassable by sowing mines broadcast and thus preventing the Germans from entering it while the main strength of the British Fleet was concentrated in the Baltic. I could not feel any conviction that this would give us the necessary security. First of all we had not got more than 5,000 mines,—whereas many scores of thousands were needed, and could not be supplied for many months; and even had we got them, what was to prevent the Germans, unless we guarded the minefields with our Fleet, from sweeping their way through them at leisure?

Therefore, while the First Sea Lord continued to advocate in general terms the entry of the Baltic, I persistently en-

deavoured to concentrate attention upon the practical steps necessary to storm and seize the island of Borkum, and thus either block in the German Fleet or bring it out to battle. In this task I addressed myself not only to the First Sea Lord and to the Staff, but also to the Commander-in-Chief. Had I found, as the result, any solid response in naval opinion, I should have been enabled to advance the subject to the point where a decision could be taken. But so far from securing such a response, I found a steady and palpable reluctance, which grew as the details of the problem came into view, and which manifested itself by lethargy and a complete absence of positive effort. There is no doubt the naval instinct was against running such risks. But if that were so, it was idle to talk airily of entering the Baltic.

On December 21, 1914, as the result of long discussions and resistances on my part to various petty mining projects, I wrote to the First Sea Lord:—

I see no objection to laying one or two secret minefields out from Heligoland to-night; or to laying some shield or barrier lines off weak points on our own coast. I expect we shall suffer inconvenience from it afterwards, but there is always a chance of a bag. It is like having a few lottery tickets. But it is no substitute for going to work. A policy of scattering a few bouquets of mines from destroyers, and building fast ships that will not be ready until all is over, is only a partial solution of our problem. I am entirely opposed to the laying down of new 'Dreadnought' ships at this stage. It will hamper more urgent work in every direction. . . .

The key to the naval situation is an oversea base, taken by force and held by force, from which our C class submarines and heavily gunned destroyers can blockade the Bight night and day; and around which and for which a series of desperate fights would take place by sea and land, to the utter ruin of the enemy.

But I cannot find anyone to make such a plan alive and dominant, and till then our situation is as I have told you, and as you justly say, that of waiting to be kicked, and wondering when and where. . . .

And again, on the 22d December:—

I am wholly with you about the Baltic. But you must close up this side first. You must take an island and block them in, *à la* Wilson; or you must break the canal or the locks, or you must cripple their Fleet in a general action. No scattering of mines will be any substitute for these alternatives.

The first practical step was to find a Commander who was favourable to the enterprise and who possessed the professional skill and personal resolution to carry it through. All these conditions were fulfilled by Admiral Lewis Bayly.

The monitors would not be ready for many months. In the meanwhile we had a number of older battleships that could be conveniently formed into a bombarding squadron. Sir Arthur Wilson had argued that effective bombardment from the sea required intensive gunnery training and exercises in order to direct and co-ordinate the fire of the ships in the highest state of perfection. We proposed, therefore, to form during the early months of 1915 a special squadron which ultimately, when the monitors arrived, would be available for the great operation, and which in the meantime could be used as required on Zeebrugge and Ostend in support of the Army. In December the First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson and I being in full agreement, Sir Lewis Bayly was transferred from his command of the 1st Battle Squadron in the Grand Fleet to command the 5th Battle Squadron ('Formidables') at the Nore, with the intention of making this squadron the nucleus of the future bombarding fleet and its new Commander the leader of the naval offensive of 1915. The reader will see how incontinently these hopes were frustrated.

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On December 29, I wrote to the Prime Minister on the general situation.

Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister.

. . . I think it quite possible that neither side will have the strength to penetrate the other's lines in the Western theatre. Belgium particularly, which it is vital to Germany to hold as a peace-counter, has no doubt been made into a mere succession of fortified lines. I think it probable that the Germans hold back several large mobile reserves of their best troops. Without attempting to take a final view, my impression is that the position of both armies is not likely to undergo any decisive change—although no doubt several hundred thousand men will be spent to satisfy the military mind on the point.

For somewhat different reasons, a similar stalemate seems likely to be reached in the Eastern theatre. When the Russians come in contact with the German railway system, they are heavily thrown back. On the other hand, withdrawn into their own country they can hold their own.

On the assumption that these views are correct, the question arises, how ought we to apply our growing military power? Are there not other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders? Further, cannot the power of the Navy be brought more directly to bear upon the enemy? If it is impossible or unduly costly to pierce the German lines on existing fronts, ought we not, as new forces come to hand, to engage him on new frontiers, and enable the Russians to do so too? The invasion of Schleswig-Holstein from the sea would at once threaten the Kiel Canal and enable Denmark to join us. The accession of Denmark would throw open the Baltic. British naval command of the Baltic would enable the Russian armies to be landed within 90 miles of Berlin; and the enemy, while being closely held on all existing lines, would be forced to face new attacks directed at vital points and exhaust himself along a still larger perimeter.

The essential preliminary is the blocking of the Heligoland debouch. The capture of a German island for an oversea base is the first indispensable step to all these possibilities. It alone can guarantee Great Britain from raid or invasion. It enables the power of our flotillas to be applied. Its retention by us would be intolerable to the enemy, and would in all probability bring about the sea battle. There is only one

island (apart from Heligoland) which fulfils Mr. Balfour's four conditions—Borkum.[1] If Borkum were seized, it could be held without compromising the action of the Grand Fleet. If Borkum were held, it seems to me probable that a series of events would follow leading in a few weeks to German ships being driven altogether from the North Sea and into their harbours and mined and blocked therein.

There are three phases of the naval war: first, the clearance of the seas and the recall of the foreign squadrons—that is nearly completed; second, the closing of the Elbe—that we have now to do; and third, the domination of the Baltic—that would be decisive.

. . . The action of the Allies proceeds almost independently. Plans could be made now for April and May which would offer good prospects of bringing the war to its decisive stage by land and sea. We ought not to drift. We ought now to consider while time remains the scope and character we wish to impart to the war in the early summer. We ought to concert our action with our allies, and particularly with Russia. We ought to form a scheme for a continuous and progressive offensive, and be ready with this new alternative when and if the direct frontal attacks in France on the German lines and Belgium have failed, as fail I fear they will. Without your direct guidance and initiative, none of these things will be done; and a succession of bloody checks in the West and in the East will leave the Allies dashed in spirit and bankrupt in policy.

During December and January I continued to explore and endeavour to animate the Baltic project. In this task I expected to encounter difficulties which might well prove insurmountable. The detailed scheme of an attack on Borkum, and for holding it after it was captured, might reveal risks and complications which no one would face. Projects of landing large armies in Schleswig-Holstein were obviously at this stage of a most speculative character. The whole business of entering and dominating the Baltic was so vast, so critical, and depended on so long a succession of events, that the plan would probably

[1] Mr. Balfour had given much attention to this question and had analysed it searchingly.

fall to the ground by its own weight while under staff study and discussion. But having regard to the First Sea Lord's favourable views, and the obvious greatness of the prize, I continued to press the subject forward and to explore it by every means open to me. Had the three great Allies said unitedly, 'This must be done. Let combined plans be prepared. Let the first place be assigned to them in 1915,' it is possible that a scheme fit to go into action upon could have been hammered out; and that the enormous technical and mechanical preparations necessary could have been made not indeed by May, but by August or September. But it would have taken the full impulse of the Allies to make the matter move.

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The alternative to Borkum and the Baltic was, of course, an amphibious enterprise to strike down Turkey and to influence and rally the Balkans. There was no inconsistency in the thought which led to its simultaneous exploration. Both plans were expressive of the same idea and rested upon the same foundation. Both were based on the conviction that the fronts in France would undergo no decisive change for an indefinite period. Both aimed at turning a hostile flank. Both held out a hand to Russia. Compared to an attack upon the Northern flank of the enemy, the Southern operation was a far smaller and less hazardous business. It did not require the risk of any intrinsically vital element in our resources. Neither by sea nor by land was the same formidable German resistance to be expected. No supreme battle need be fought afloat or ashore. It was essentially a subsidiary operation. But it was an operation from which consequences of first magnitude might flow. The elimination of Turkey as a factor and the uniting of the Balkan States against Germany and Austria was as important, though not so immediately intense and momentous, as the domination of the Baltic and a Russian invasion of Germany from the North. The prize was at

least equal though more remote, the difficulties less baffling, the stakes smaller, and the risk less.

It had long been obvious that the ideal action against Turkey, if she came into the war, was at the earliest possible moment to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula with an adequate army by an amphibious surprise attack and to pass a fleet into the Marmora. This operation could be covered by serious feints on the Syrian coast or at Alexandretta, or even at Smyrna. The Turkish seaboard was peculiarly liable to naval and amphibious attack. All points were, in fact, equally and simultaneously threatened from the sea. But the Gallipoli Peninsula, giving access by water to Constantinople, if taken, exposed Turkey to a fatal stroke.

Therefore, when at the end of August I formed the opinion that our diplomacy would fail to keep Turkey from joining our enemies, I had immediately begun, as has been shown in the first volume, to make enquiries from the War Office about the possibilities of such an operation. In the hope that Greece would come in on our side, I wrote to General Douglas, the then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on September 1, 1914, my letter asking for joint plans for the landing of a Greek army. In consequence, I received the memorandum from General Callwell, already quoted.[1] The Foreign Office, however, had thought it necessary to decline the Greek offer at that time; and we searched in vain for an army.

Turkey made war upon us at the end of October, 1914, and the question of the defence of Egypt arose. On November 25, with the hearty concurrence of Lord Fisher, I had pointed out to the War Council that the true method of defending Egypt was by an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula, but that this was 'a very difficult operation, requiring a large force.' Sixty thousand men had been the figure specified by General Callwell when the question of using a Greek army had been discussed, and this was to be moved in two echelons of

[1] See Volume I.

thirty thousand each. By the end of November two Australian divisions had arrived in Egypt, a Territorial division was already in that country, and it seemed that here perhaps was the nucleus of an army which, skilfully and suddenly launched, might have struck either at Gallipoli, or, as a less serious alternative, at Alexandretta. On November 30, Admiral Oliver, the Chief of the Staff, with whom I had had prolonged discussions, sent me the following minute:—

First Lord,

I propose to let the Transport Department know that transports should be kept in Egypt in case they are required for an expedition.

Will it be sufficient to tell them to keep enough transports in Egypt for one division of troops, as that is the smallest unit complete with all arms?

H. F. O.

Which I passed on.

November 30, 1914.

Lord Kitchener,

Had we not better keep enough transports congregated for 40,000 men, or shall we disperse them ready to assemble at short (? what) notice?

W. S. C.

Receiving the following answer:—

I will give Admiralty full notice. I do not think transports need be detained in Egypt yet.

K.

I do not censure the War Office decision not to act at this time. Action would have been a masterstroke, but no one could be blamed for not attempting it. The need elsewhere was too great. It was a thing to ponder over and to make plans for. But up to the end of 1914 there cannot be any reproach that troops were not provided for such an enterprise. Moreover, we did not fight the action of the Falklands until December 2, and until we had destroyed Admiral von

Spee our naval resources were also strained to their utmost. The relief afforded by that action was instantaneous. But the ships were spread all over the world in their search for the enemy, and on convoy duty and trade protection; and no new naval concentration in the Mediterranean was possible before the end of January.

Having made the offer to collect transports and horse-boats and other craft necessary for landing an army of 40,000 men in a single echelon, for which the tonnage could then have been found, and this offer being declined, I put the project on one side and thought no more of it for the time. In case, however, the War Office should, at a later stage, wish to undertake an amphibious operation in the Eastern Mediterranean, Lord Fisher began to despatch horse-boats to Alexandria as occasion served and whenever he had ships going out.

The position then at the end of 1914 was that both the great amphibious alternatives were being studied at the Admiralty, that the Southern had been put aside since November on account of the failure to find an army; that the Northern plan presented more formidable difficulties the more it was examined, and could not in any case materialise for many months.

* * * * *

No doubt all these schemes of action were attended by risk, not only to those who executed but to those who devised them. They required intense exertions on a great scale, and involved the certainty of cost. Against such risks, exertions, and costs of action, must be balanced the dangers and consequences of inaction. Before projects of penetrating the Baltic or forcing the Dardanelles by the British Fleet are dismissed as 'unsafe' or impracticable, before an invasion of Schleswig-Holstein or the despatch of an army to the Balkan Peninsula or to Gallipoli are condemned as 'unsound,' the mind of the reader must also dwell upon the bloody slaughters of Loos-Champagne, of the Somme, of Passchendaele; upon the disasters, almost

fatal, of Caporetto, 1917, and of the 21st of March, 1918; upon the Russian collapse, revolution and desertion; upon the awful peril of the submarine warfare in 1917. It is on such a background that all plans for finding, by sudden and complex manœuvres or devices, short cuts to victory can alone be effectually depicted.

But as a key to the complicated and debatable alternatives which these pages expose, certain practical propositions may be presented. If these are comprehended and assented to, the rest will follow naturally and each thought will fall into its proper place and just relation. I therefore set them down categorically forthwith.

On Land.

1. The Decisive theatre is the theatre where a vital decision may be obtained at any given time. The Main theatre is that in which the main armies or fleets are stationed. This is not at all times the Decisive theatre.
2. If the fronts or centres of armies cannot be broken, their flanks should be turned. If these flanks rest on the seas, the manœuvres to turn them must be amphibious and dependent on sea power.
3. The least-guarded strategic points should be selected for attack, not those most strongly guarded.
4. In any hostile combination, once it is certain that the strongest Power cannot be directly defeated itself, but cannot stand without the weakest, it is the weakest that should be attacked.
5. No offensive on land should be launched until an effective means—numbers, surprise, munitions, or mechanical devices—of carrying it through has been discovered.

On Sea.

1. The Grand Fleet should not be hazarded for any purpose less than that of a general sea battle.

2. A naval decision should be provoked at the earliest opportunity.
3. The Navy should actively aid the Army with its surplus forces.

These general principles remained my guides throughout the whole war. They run counter, of course, to the dominant military view, and diverge to some extent from the naval practice. How far they were justified by events, others must judge; but the history of the struggle will afford many illustrations of their adoption or repudiation by both the combatants and of the consequences which followed therefrom.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

January, 1915

A Retrogression—The Sea Coast Plan—Correspondence with Sir John French—Joffre's Opposition—The Futile Offensives of December—The Risks of Petty Operations—Further Correspondence—Sir John French Perseveres in His Plan—The New Year Opens Ill—The Loss of the *Formidable*—Repercussions of the Loss of the *Formidable*—Difficulties Increase with Delay—German Naval Policy—Admiral von Pohl's Memorandum—The Kaiser's Decisions—German Under Sea and Air Plans—The Zeppelin Menace—Lord Fisher's Distress—Reprisals—His First Resignation—Incorporation of the New Armies in the British Expeditionary Force—My Minute of January 6—My Letter to Sir John French of January 8—Abandonment of the Plan, January 23—The End of the Sea Coast Project.

AS soon as the battle of Ypres-Yser was decided in favour of the Allies, i.e., about the third week in November, 1914, Sir John French wished to make an advance in conjunction with the Belgian Army along the sea coast from Nieuport towards Ostend and Zeebrugge. This project was a limited and local operation not at all to be confused with the great strategic alternatives which previous chapters have examined. It appealed very strongly both to Lord Fisher and Sir Arthur Wilson. The Admiralty War Staff were increasingly apprehensive of the dangers of a hostile submarine base developing at Zeebrugge from which our cross-Channel communications would be continually harassed. I had always wished to see the British Army with its left hand on the sea, nearest to its home, and with its left flank guarded by the Navy. I saw in this the prospect of close and effectual cooperation between Fleet and Army out of which the amphibious operations in which I was a believer might develop. If

the Army was resolved to attack, and thought the ground practicable, surely the sea flank with strong naval support offered the most hopeful chances and the most fruitful results. We therefore at the Admiralty all looked in one direction and made haste to offer every possible support to Sir John French in his desires.

Neither Lord Kitchener nor the War Council were opposed to these ideas. On the contrary, they united British opinion —professional and political, naval and military, War Office and General Headquarters. General Joffre, however, did not think well of the plan and pointed to the capture of the Wytschaete Ridge as a more hopeful solution. The French Government also on political grounds showed themselves strongly opposed to allowing the British armies to occupy the sea flank, or to acquire a close association with the Belgian forces. Although every point in the line where troops of different nations were in contact was a point of special weakness—a joint in the harness (*une soudure*)—the French authorities, civil and military alike, insisted on multiplying them by keeping a large French force between the British and the Belgians. These measures were not wholly inspired by the merits of the military situation.

In consequence, the coastal operation was delayed from week to week, and with every week that passed the German fortified lines grew stronger and their batteries on the sea front became more powerful. The letters and extracts which follow tell the tale with an authenticity that no subsequent writings can claim.

After a visit to Sir John French during which he explained to me fully all his plans and wishes, I wrote as follows:—

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

December 8, 1914.

Kitchener agrees entirely with your view. We held an immediate conference with the Prime Minister and Sir E.

Grey; and as the result the strongest possible telegram is being drafted. The Admiralty attach the greatest importance to the operation, and will aid in every way. We are already making the necessary preparations on an extensive scale. Later I will let you have very full and clear details. The combination must be perfect.

K. proposes to let you have the 27th Division in time.

I hope you will continue to press the new plan hard, both here at home and on the French generals. . . .

I am putting some experimental shields in hand, and will let you know about them later.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

December 10, 1914.

The tides are favourable from the 14th onward, but firing would begin later each day. A gale would interrupt the naval operations.

Two battleships are all that can work off Ostend and Nieuport at one time. But arrangements would be made to replace any sunk or set on fire and to maintain the bombardment night and day as required. In addition three monitors, two gunboats, and six destroyers will be used. Total heavy guns twenty-six, of which nine are very heavy. See attached note by the Chief of the Staff.[1]

This force should be sufficient to support the advance of the Army on Ostend.

Sir John French to Mr. Churchill.

December 10, 1914.

. . . So far all seems to go well: but I fear Joffre and Foch will make difficulties. The preparations for a forward move, commenced as I told you when you were here, had even then proceeded farther than I thought, and I'm afraid we must carry this through now from our present position.

I am in close consultation with Foch and shall hear at once what view Joffre takes. But if he agreed to an immediate change of our position the forward move now projected (and for which troops have been moved into position) would have to be postponed for several days. He will hardly agree to

[1] Not printed.

this and I'm not altogether sure that, from a general point of view, he would be right in incurring the delay. . . .

This letter foreshadowed the weak and partial offensive about to be directed by French and British forces against the Wytschaete and Messines positions, the capture of which would according to the French High Command automatically disengage the coast.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

December 11, 1914.

I have sent you to-day a Memo. through Kitchener showing in some detail the form naval assistance on the flank could take.

I was disappointed by your letter and do not quite know what is purposed now. But I wish you all good fortune in the coming battle from the depth of my heart. Your difficulties are great. All of us must look only to the great conclusion.

You must use the Navy or not as circumstances require. All our arrangements will be complete by the 15th. But weather introduces an element of uncertainty.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

December 13, 1914.

Of course we are disappointed here at the turn events have taken, but we shall do our best to help the French in their feeble secondary 'dog-in-the-manger' attack on the left flank. The risks to the ships are much greater than they were last time. Many heavy guns are in position on the sea front, and there are at least three submarines at Zeebrugge.

Unless there is a genuine push made on the flank we cannot hang about day after day amid these perils.

The operations prescribed by General Joffre ended in futility and loss. Especially was this so on the British front.

The unfortunate troops were ordered to leave their trenches and assault the enemy's strongly wired and defended lines without it being possible to give them more than an exiguous and totally inadequate artillery support. They waded and plodded slowly through the indescribable winter bogs of No Man's Land under cruel rifle and machine-gun fire. None penetrated the enemy's line, few reached the German wire, and those that did remained there till they died and mouldered. Similar scenes were witnessed on the main French sector of attack.

On the coast the French operations were on the smallest scale, and our supporting ships were exposed to much danger without adequate purpose.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

December 19, 1914.

We are receiving almost daily requests from the French for naval support on the Belgian coast. We regret we are unable to comply. The small vessels by themselves cannot face the new shore batteries, and it is not justifiable to expose battleships to submarine perils unless to support a land attack of primary importance. If such an attack is delivered all the support in my memorandum forwarded to you through the Secretary of State for War will, of course, be afforded. I should be glad if you would explain this to General Foch as it is painful to the officers concerned to have to make repeated refusals.

When the failure of the land attacks became apparent, I wrote:—

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

December 28, 1914.

I hope you will now get to the sea flank. I am very sorry about the losses. It was hard that you should have been

made to fight it out on that line. I expect the enemy got it as bad.

About the motor-buses and other of my small interests now in your charge. I have said to Kitchener, 'Do what you like with them. It is a matter of honour and fair play.' We shall now see what that works out at.[1]

I hope you will take good care of your health and not let yourself be vexed by trifles—as I am fool enough to be. But still I try. All will go well: and the day will come when we shall have 'finally beaten down Satan under our feet.' Till then in all directions, and on all occasions, count on your sincere friend.

Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister.

December 29, 1914.

When Kitchener declared there was nothing in front of us but 'boys and old men,' he was wrong,[2] and when you and I agreed there was a fine and terrible army in our front, we were right. It has taken 5,000 men and more, in killed and wounded, to prove the simple fact.

I understand that Joffre told French he could take over the whole line from La Bassée to the sea as soon as he had the troops. At least two more corps are required and these cannot, I presume, be supplied before March. In my judgment the flank move is a very different job from what it was when we first talked of it six weeks ago. The whole front and angle right up to the Dutch frontier is fortified line behind line; and although you can get on along the coast, the advantages to be gained are reduced as much as the difficulties are augmented—like the Sibylline Books (note the classic touch). . . .

[1] This referred to the status and treatment of the officers and men who were now to pass from Admiralty to War Office control.

[2] He was not wrong so far as the German Reserve Corps which had attacked in the first battle of Ypres were concerned, which were, in fact, composed of student volunteers and Landwehr. But our view on the relative strength was well founded.

Sir John French to Mr. Churchill.

December 31, 1914.

This is in reality only a hurried line to wish you all good luck for 1915; but as I am writing I want to tell you quite privately how far my plans have progressed towards the object we both have so much at heart, namely a powerful advance Eastward along the coast, supported by the Navy.

I went to see Joffre on Sunday and had a long talk with him. He agreed in principle to the British Troops acting in conjunction with the Belgians on the left flank of the Allied line next to the sea; and it was arranged that I was to relieve all the French Troops to the north of me as quickly as the reinforcements coming to me would allow.

As, however, I now feel myself at liberty to enter into negotiations for combined action with the King of the Belgians, I have begun to do so through Bridges;[1] and I have a scheme which, if the King will only accept, should enable me to take over the line within the next two or three weeks and find a sufficient reserve to enter energetically upon a land advance.

I feel I am writing rather in enigmas, but I do not like to tell you anything in detail until I am sure that the King of the Belgians will give his consent. But if my suggestions are accepted and the plan comes off, I can assure you there will be a land force of sufficient size to justify a vigorous Naval support and to give good promise of success.

* * * * *

The New Year opened for the Admiralty under queer and stormy skies. We have seen how Vice-Admiral Bayly had been brought from the Grand Fleet to command the 5th Battle Squadron at the Nore, and how this squadron was to become the nucleus of a specially trained bombarding fleet, through which it was hoped to develop the means of a naval offensive. The Admiral came down from the North by no means enamoured of a change which gave him a squadron of 'Formidables' in place of the 'Dreadnoughts' which he had

[1] Colonel Bridges, our representative at the Belgian Headquarters.

commanded. Like most sailors, his heart was with the Grand Fleet; but he addressed himself to his new work with his customary zeal. He sought permission from the Admiralty to take his squadron into the Channel for a cruise. He passed the Straits in daylight under flotilla escort arranged from the Admiralty and spent December 31 exercising off Portland. The flotilla after seeing him through the Strait, left him at dusk to return to Dover, and no evil consequences had occurred during the daylight. The ships turned westward down channel after dark and by 2 a.m. were approaching the Start. The wind and sea were rising, but the moon shone brightly. The speed was 10 knots and the course direct, not zigzag. A German submarine, cruising on the surface of the Channel, unobserved in the moonlight amid the dancing waves, fired a torpedo with fatal effect against the *Formidable*, the last ship of the line. In two hours and a half the vessel sank with the loss of Captain Loxley and over 500 officers and men, the highest forms of discipline and devotion being observed by all ranks.

This melancholy news reached the Admiralty with the light of New Year's Day. Lord Fisher was indignant at the manner in which the squadron had been handled. The explanations which were demanded of the Admiral were not considered satisfactory by his naval chiefs. To my extreme regret, both on personal and on far wider grounds, it was decided to remove him from his command. I therefore appointed him to the control of Greenwich College where he remained for some time.[1]

Under the impression of the sinking of the *Formidable*, the First Sea Lord and the Admiralty Staff advised that a formal and official communication should be made to the Military authorities. Accordingly:—

[1] Vice-Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly in the later years of the war, as is well known, fully vindicated the high qualities with which he had been credited.

The First Lord of the Admiralty to the Secretary of State for War for transmission to the Commander-in-Chief British Expeditionary Army.

January 1, 1915.

The battleship *Formidable* was sunk this morning by a submarine in the Channel. Information from all quarters shows that the Germans are steadily developing an important submarine base at Zeebrugge. Unless an operation can be undertaken to clear the coast, and particularly to capture this place, it must be recognised that the whole transportation of troops across the Channel will be seriously and increasingly compromised.

The Admiralty are of opinion that it would be possible, under cover of warships, to land a large force at Zeebrugge in conjunction with any genuine forward movement along the seashore to Ostend. They wish these views, which they have so frequently put forward, to be placed once again before the French commanders, and hope they may receive the consideration which their urgency and importance require.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

January 1, 1915.

It was a great delight to me to get your letter of good wishes for the New Year, which I reciprocate from the bottom of my heart. Our friendship though begun late has grown strong and deep, and I feel sure it will stand with advantage all the tests of this remarkable time.

The coast business is I think more difficult now; and if done we must concert the naval measures with you to a nicety. Zeebrugge I feel sure should at the critical moment —and as the thong of your attack—be assailed from the sea; and then kick back towards Ostend.

I had to ask Kitchener to send you a telegram to-day about the serious danger developing there by the submarine base. To-day it has cost us a fine ship and 600 lives. I think the telegram will strengthen your hands. I shall look forward to your full schemes. We shall be ready to run great risks in your support. . . .

I have not got over those cruisers being missed. [On December 16.] It is a recurring pang. Really, with all

your stress, your affair is not such a tricky one as ours. At least you can get results in proportion to your strength, whereas the caprice of fortune disposes absolutely with us of our strongest units.

I hope you feel as the result of your visit here how profoundly the Government appreciate the valiant and splendid part you have played, and enabled the British Army to play.

* * * * *

On December 27, 1914, the German Emperor called for a short memorandum on the future employment of the German naval forces including submarines and aircraft. In response to this Captain Zenker, Admiral von Pohl's Staff Officer, drew up the next day a comprehensive paper. He began by re-stating the main principles which up to this date had governed all the German naval conduct, viz., to hold back the main body until a favourable opportunity occurs for a decisive action; to endeavour to bring about an equalisation of forces by operations of the auxiliary forces; to endeavour by attacks on the enemy's coast to induce the British to accept action in an area desired by the Germans. He proceeded to criticise the results which this policy had as yet achieved:—

In spite of the successes of our submarines and mine-laying vessels off the enemy's coast, no appreciable damage has been done to his heavy forces. The detrimental effect of our mining operations on enemy trade has not been sufficient to cause the British to try to block the German Bight in order to catch our commerce destroyers as they come out. The two cruiser attacks on the English coast resulted in no appreciable gain of a purely military nature, and in spite of their great political effect they have caused no change in the naval strategy of the enemy.

He predicted that the submarine and mining operations and occasional attacks on the English coast would in all probability prove still less effective, and would result in

greater German losses in the future on account of 'appropriate counter measures.' From this he concluded that the German Fleet ought to make every effort to bring the enemy Fleet into action; 'if possible, when his forces are divided; if not, when they are all together.' For this purpose the High Sea forces should 'proceed to sea very much more frequently than hitherto, and should not be afraid to remain on occasions outside the German estuaries and minefields for several days together.' The submarines should be used more intimately in conjunction with the battle fleet. He pointed out that if a British attack were launched against the Heligoland Bight and British submarines were employed in besetting the estuaries at that time, the German Fleet would incur losses before it could put to sea and come into action. 'It is therefore advisable that the Fleet should be at sea as much as possible and that it should take the risks involved rather than merely defend the coasts and allow its fighting strength and readiness for action to diminish more and more.'

This Memorandum, after being duly edited, was submitted to the Emperor by Admiral von Pohl and the German Chancellor at an audience with the Emperor, from which Admiral von Tirpitz was excluded, on January 9, 1915. Admiral von Pohl's main conclusion was that 'while continuing the mining and submarine offensive in an energetic manner, a general permission should be accorded to the Commander-in-Chief, High Sea Fleet, to act on his own initiative more than hitherto as regards measures he may consider necessary for the attainment of the German aims.' The next day in response to this the Emperor authorised the following instruction:—

> The Commander-in-Chief of the High Sea Fleet is hereby authorised to make frequent advances in the North Sea on his own initiative, with the object of cutting off advanced enemy forces or of attacking them with superior strength. As far as possible the Commander-in-Chief is to avoid en-

counters with superior enemy forces, as in the present circumstances the High Sea Fleet has the added importance of being a valuable political instrument in the hands of the All Highest War Lord; an unfavourable outcome of a naval action would therefore be a particularly serious matter. Proposed advances on a large scale as far as the enemy's coast are to be reported beforehand to His Majesty the Kaiser.

Captain Zenker was much disgusted at this ruling.

'His Majesty's decision,' he wrote to his Chief, Admiral von Pohl, 'as worded by the Chief of the Naval Cabinet, amounts in my opinion to a direct rejection of Your Excellency's proposal. This decision will not lead the Commander-in-Chief to make any fundamental change in his conduct of the war, and a fundamental change is essential if the Fleet is not to forfeit its military and political importance in an ever-increasing degree. As long as the "preservation" of the Fleet is to be the chief guide for its conduct, no energetic offensive can be commenced; offensive operations will become "more dangerous" owing to the natural strengthening of the enemy's counter-measures, and our first endeavour will still be the endeavour "to get back to the estuaries as quickly and safely as possible." '

This protest did not evoke any further observations from superior or supreme authority. And, as predicted by Captain Zenker, the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral von Ingenohl, made no change in principle in his naval policy. In fact he 'raised objections to almost every suggestion of offensive operations.' He declared it to be almost impossible to win partial success against portions of the British Fleet. He minimised the danger of 'getting rusty' from staying in harbour, and he deprecated any German offensive 'beyond her half of the North Sea,' as that would be doing 'exactly what Great Britain has consistently desired since the beginning of hostilities.' To make certain that the Emperor's new 'muzzling order' was thoroughly obeyed, Admiral von Pohl thought it necessary to add the following: 'No offensive is to be

carried as far as the enemy's coast with the object of fighting a decisive action there.' Thus the Emperor, the Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Commander-in-Chief himself were all united in a chorus of caution.

It is extraordinary that such decisions and instructions should have heralded within a fortnight an extremely imprudent and inconsequent excursion.

Admiral von Pohl's memorandum to the Emperor had further proposed the submarine attack on merchant shipping:

> The commerce blockade against England is to be begun as soon as possible, so that its effect may not be minimised by the accumulation of food-stuffs and raw materials which has been started. The Chancellor agrees with me in regarding a submarine blockade as one of the most effective measures to secure our war aims with respect to Great Britain. He considers, however, that it cannot be made use of until the issue on land has been decided in our favour, after which there will be no further likelihood of Neutral Powers going over to our enemies. It is my opinion that in order to attain our military aims we ought to make use of a weapon placed in our hands without paying any regard to neutrals. . . . An effective blockade that really harms Great Britain will tend rather to make neutrals hesitate still further before going over to our enemies.

On this the Emperor's decision was as follows:—

> The submarine war against commerce is to be postponed temporarily until the present ambiguity of the political situation is cleared up. The decision of the All Highest is then to be sought once more. Meanwhile the submarines are to be prepared for war against commerce.

Lastly, Admiral von Pohl recommended 'sending airships to attack England in the months of January and February, when the weather is suitably calm and cool.' The first objec-

tives were to be 'those parts of London which are of military importance and the military establishments on the lower reaches of the Thames. . . . Buildings of historical interest and private property should be spared as much as possible.'

The Imperial decision was:—

London itself is not to be bombed at present; attacks are to be confined to the dockyards, arsenals, docks (those near London also) and military establishments of a general nature (also Aldershot Camp if there are no German prisoners there).

The Naval Staff interpreted this to mean that the docks in the east of London were to be attacked.

* * * * *

So excellent was our Intelligence Service that reports of what was passing in the minds of the German Naval Staff reached us even before Admiral von Pohl's memorandum had been laid before the Emperor. The danger of an air attack on London appeared so imminent and our means of resisting it so ineffectual that I felt bound to send the following warning to the Cabinet on New Year's Day:—

January 1, 1915.

Information from a trustworthy source has been received that the Germans intend to make an attack on London by airships on a great scale at an early opportunity. The Director of the Air Department reports that there are approximately twenty German airships which can reach London now from the Rhine, carrying each a ton of high explosives. They could traverse the English part of the journey, coming and going, in the dark hours. The weather hazards are considerable, but there is no known means of preventing the airships coming, and not much chance of punishing them on their return. The unavenged destruction of non-combatant life may therefore be very considerable. Having given most careful consideration to this subject, and taken every measure in their power, the Air Department of the Admiralty must make it plain that they are quite powerless to prevent such

an attack if it is launched with good fortune and in favourable weather conditions.

I attach a paper by the Director of the Air Department.

W. S. C.

The paper[1] set forth in exact detail and at length all that we had done and were doing, and showed how many months must intervene before any real means of defence or even of retaliation could be brought into existence. This situation preyed on the mind of the First Sea Lord. He believed that a catastrophe was impending and that he would be held partly responsible. He proposed to me that we should take a large number of hostages from the German population in our hands and should declare our intention of executing one of them for every civilian killed by bombs from aircraft. I, on the other hand, felt sympathy for these helpless people—'puppets of fate' as one of them mournfully described himself—and had from the very beginning of the war urged publicly a merciful attitude towards them. Shooting them in droves or threatening to do so would not make the slightest difference to the German action, and would only stain our reputation. I was therefore offended to receive from Lord Fisher the following official minute:—

First Lord. *January* 4, 1915.

* * * * *

There is no defence except reprisals to be officially announced beforehand to the German Government.

As this step has not been taken I must with great reluctance ask to be relieved in my present official position as First Sea Lord because the Admiralty under present arrangements will be responsible for the massacre coming suddenly upon and unprepared for by the public.

I have allowed a week to elapse much against my judgment before taking this step to avoid embarrassing the Government. I cannot delay any longer.

F.

[1] Not printed.

I thought it necessary to reply as follows:—

Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.

January 4, 1915.

The question of aerial defence is not one upon which you have any professional experience. The question of killing prisoners in reprisal for an aerial attack is not one for the Admiralty, and certainly not for you to decide. The Cabinet alone can settle such a matter. I will bring your view to their notice at our meeting to-morrow. After much reflection I cannot support it. I am circulating a paper giving the facts about a Zeppelin raid as far as we can estimate them.

I hope I am not to take the last part of your letter seriously. I have always made up my mind never to dissuade anyone serving in the Department over which I preside from resigning if they wish to do so. Business becomes impossible on any other terms.

But I sympathise with your feelings of exasperation at our powerlessness to resist certain forms of attack; and I presume I may take your letter simply as an expression of those feelings.

This letter received no reply; but later in the day when I met the Admiral he appeared in the best of tempers. He did not refer to the incident, and our work together proceeded as usual. Lord Fisher has narrated his part in this incident in his book, or I should not have referred to it here. But it may well have counted in the general balance of our relationship.

* * * * *

But with the discussions about the coastal advance there was soon mingled a very sharp dispute between the War Office and General Headquarters upon the system by which the new units should when trained be incorporated in the armies already in the field. Lord Kitchener and Sir John French found themselves at complete variance on this. The Secretary of State wanted to employ his new armies at least in Divisions. The Commander-in-Chief wished to break them up and mix them by battalions with the seasoned troops.

I inclined to the views of the Commander-in-Chief, but I did all I could to promote a settlement between the two high authorities concerned.

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Asquith.

January 6, 1915.

PRIME MINISTER,—

I have read the memorandum from Sir John French which you showed me this morning.[1] I do not feel convinced that the organisation which the Commander-in-Chief outlines is the best which could be devised for utilising the troops of the new army. But I think there is a great deal to be said for the principle which Sir John French advocates, of intermingling units from the new armies with those of the regular forces now serving in the field. It is undesirable that British armies serving side by side in one theatre of the war should show great differences in character, experience, and training; and that the British line should be maintained at one part over a very large front by army corps which have seen all the hardest fighting, while another equally large section of the front is to be held by an army or armies who come entirely new to active service, whose training though excellent has been very short, and who necessarily lack in their brigade, divisional, and army corps staffs, officers of the highest professional experience. Such a system might produce very great unevenness in the line; would certainly not give the new troops the best chance of distinguishing themselves; and may easily, through a retirement of so large a section of the line, lead to a general defeat. The problem is no doubt a difficult one; but I think that the preponderance of military opinion in this and other countries would advocate the formation of an army in the field whose army corps at any rate, and probably whose divisions, were equal in quality. I can quite understand the misgivings of a Commander-in-Chief who contemplates one portion of his forces consisting entirely of new troops and inexperienced staffs, while the other consists exclusively of tried and seasoned units under the staffs who have been in continual contact with the actual conditions of the present war. I believe also that it would be taken as a great compli-

[1] Not printed.

ment by the troops of the new army if they were to be brigaded with, and enabled to serve alongside of the regular battalions who have covered themselves with so much distinction. I cannot consider that it would be a reasonable thing to segregate the two forces. It might easily lead to a very unpleasant rivalry and friction between 'French's Army' and 'Kitchener's Army,' instead of all serving harmoniously together as the British Army. The danger seems to me to be serious and real, and I think we should take timely steps to avoid it. The sound and accepted principle of military organisation is undoubtedly that young troops should be brigaded with seasoned troops, and that young troops specially need experienced and trained staff organisation. Marked differences between large portions of an army are detrimental to military efficiency, and add an immense complication to its tactical employment.

Acting on the above principle, I think it was a pity that the three divisions of British troops from India, the 27th, 28th, and 29th, which consist exclusively of regulars serving with the colours without any admixture of reservists, should have been sent abroad without any admixture into their cadres of the well-trained recruits of the new armies. If every company in these three divisions had been divided into two and then raised to full strength by the addition of an equal number of soldiers from three divisions of the new army, we should have had six divisions almost immediately ready which would have been almost as good as the original divisions mobilised in England on the declaration of war, and certainly far more ready to take the field immediately than any homogeneous force raised since August. As it is, the thirty-six battalions of these three divisions do not contain a single reservist, and differ in that respect from every other unit employed by any country in the field. It seems to me a waste of our very small number of regular soldiers serving with the colours to use them concentrated in this way instead of using them as cadres on which to build the excellent material now coming to hand. This however, is a digression, though it illustrates the same principle.[1]

[1] It is much to be regretted that this proposal was not carried out. It alone would have given us the highly-trained force we needed so sorely in March and April.

On the other hand, I agree entirely with Lord Kitchener that the new armies and the territorials should not be absorbed piecemeal into the existing army and I should deprecate in principle any departure from the accepted and well-known organisation of brigades, divisions, and army corps. Marked and serious divergence of opinion between the Commander-in-Chief and the armies in the field on the one hand, and the Secretary of State and the forces raised in England on the other, ought to be prevented. I would therefore propose for your consideration, and subsequently for that of the Cabinet, a middle course. As soon as the first new army is ready to go out, let two battalions from every brigade of the first new army change places with two battalions of the corresponding brigades of the first army now in the field. This would secure an absolutely even level over the whole of the thirty-six brigades; and if there was a proper interchange of officers between the regular and new staffs, two armies would have been created exactly equal in quality, both of a very high standard, and both directed by experienced staffs, instead of one veteran and professional army, and the other recruit and emergency army. When the second new army was ready to go out, the same process should take place with the second regular army. I am sure that this is the right way, and the only way, to attain a large homogeneous army capable of acting together against the enemy in April and May; and I do not think any considerations of sentiment, still less any supposed rivalry between the army now training at home and the army now in the field, ought to prevent us from taking the best steps open to us to increase our military power.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

January 8, 1915.

Your memorandum was circulated to the Cabinet and the War Council. Kitchener also read to the War Council this morning the correspondence you have just sent me. No one could say that he did not place us fairly in possession of your views. Your letter in answer to his made a profound impression. On the other hand he demurred very strongly to sending the fifty-two territorial battalions, saying that their despatch now would dislocate all his arrangements for the future, whether in regard to the expansion of the army for foreign

service, or the provision for home defence. He also read a letter from you, written a few days before your memorandum, about artillery ammunition, and proved, I thought successfully, that it was physically impossible to satisfy these requirements. Both these conditions, i.e., the fifty-two battalions and the ammunition, were, he said, according to you indispensable to the coast offensive. Secondly, he adduced a great mass of evidence showing the probability of a renewed German assault upon the Anglo-French lines in the near future, against which every preparation must be made. To this end he was going to send you the 28th and 29th Divisions and the Canadians in the course of the next six weeks. In view of this very strong case, the opinion was that we had no choice but to await this new attack before attempting an offensive move ourselves. Great doubt was thrown, and naturally exists here, on the ability and even the intention of Joffre to make a really strong offensive himself; and even if his offensive were launched, it was said that the coast attack by the British would not be an integral part of his plans.

The Prime Minister, while not dissenting from the general opinion, stated that he had written to you hoping that you could come over early next week, provided the military situation permitted. I strongly urge you to do this if you can. Another meeting of the War Council will be held, at which you and, I gather, any officer you might bring with you, would be present. The question of how the new army was to be interwoven with the existing army was not discussed at length. I send you a note which I have prepared on the subject, a copy of which I have given to the Prime Minister and to Kitchener. Kitchener tells me that he certainly contemplates the mingling of the armies by divisions, but does not want to go beyond this, and that anyhow he does not want any public announcement at the present time which would impair the enthusiasm and esprit de corps of the new forces. . . .

I am bound to say that I do not think that anyone could complain of the way in which Kitchener stated your position, though the differences of view were apparent. If you find it possible to come over, I expect we can get to a general agreement. If not, I will come over to Dunkirk and we can meet at Furnes. My only desire is to keep us all together, and to see that you are properly sustained in your great task. If it is

true that the Germans are going to attack, then it would be much better to give them another good bleeding before clearing the coast, urgent though that be. But is it true? I send you one or two other papers of interest, which please treat as entirely personal and secret. Above all, my dear friend, do not be vexed or discouraged. We are on the stage of history. Let us keep our anger for the common foe. I have kept Freddie[1] back to bring this to you, and am sending him over in a destroyer to-night.

Don't fail to come if you possibly can. I can fetch you at Calais or Boulogne any time after dark, and bring you here with the utmost speed and little risk.

In reply Sir John French declared his intention to come to England, adding that the expectations of a German attack were according to his Intelligence Service unfounded. He was still set upon the coastal advance. On January 23, he wrote that he had had a long conference with General Joffre the chief point of which was, 'that the French do not attach anything like so much importance to the coast operation as we do, and what they really want above all things is to be completely relieved in the North and their troops set free to strengthen their line elsewhere and support a possible offensive movement.'

He continued: . . . it was finally arranged that I should only employ one British Corps (instead of two) for any offensive operation I might want to undertake, and use the other to relieve more French troops. In view of the situation as I know it to be really, I think this was quite a just and right compromise.

I may tell you therefore, finally, that I am prepared to commence a joint operation between the 10th and 15th March; the forces employed will probably be one British Cavalry Corps, one British Army Corps, De Mitry's detachment of about 10,000, whatever Naval land contingent you can give me, and the bulk of the Belgian Army. This force will be supported by (I hope) four or five 9·2-inch howitzers and as

[1] Captain the Hon. F. E. Guest, M.P., A.D.C. to Sir John French.

many of the 15-inch guns as you will have let me have by that time. Whether we can do all that we intended to do (i.e., secure a line of entrenchments stretching across from Dixmude to the Dutch Frontier) depends upon the result of my investigations (now being carried out) of our ability to inundate a large part of the country. . . .

Just as I am sending this letter I hear that the arrival of the 9·2-inch howitzers is to be delayed for three or four weeks. I really think this is too bad. We *must* have power to keep down the enemy's long-range artillery fire and at present we have only got this one 9·2-inch howitzer and the eight 6-inch guns. May I appeal to you and Bacon to come to the rescue and send us one or two of the 15-inch guns which you are preparing? You see in all my troubles I fall back upon you.[1]

I accepted this postponement, as equivalent to the final shelving of the plan: and this was eventually the result.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

January 24, 1915.

. . . Of course your decision is a heavy blow to us. But I am not going to waste time and strength about *choses jugées*.

Two 15-inch howitzers complete with 150 rounds of ammunition for the *two* will be at your disposal in France thoroughly equipped on February 15, if you claim them through the War Office. Thereafter we work up from ten to fifteen rounds a day. . . .

Thus ended the Sea Coast project. It petered out like so many other schemes in this period of various devices and invariable indecision. Whether it would have succeeded or not, no one can tell. The chances certainly diminished with every day that passed. All that can be said is that it offered a far more promising theatre for British operations than those to which they were subsequently confined. It brought the

[1] At the end of August, 1914, I had ordered on my own responsibility, but with Lord Kitchener's approval, 10 15-inch howitzers from the Coventry works. These weapons will be referred to in the next Chapter in connection with the origin of the Tanks.

Army and Navy together and seemed to enable us to give the Army some of that heavy artillery support of which they stood, and were long to stand, bitterly in need. Including the landing at Zeebrugge with all its risks, it still held the field in British military thought up to the year 1917. At that time our resources of all kinds had greatly increased, but so also had those of the enemy.

Meanwhile other events had been occurring, and other prospects had come into view, destined to spring from words into action, and thereafter, as they developed, to devour every other alternative plan.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF TANKS AND SMOKE

Birth of the Idea—The Armoured Cars—Admiral Bacon's 15-inch Howitzers—Caterpillar Tractors—The First Attempt to Make a Tank—The Second Attempt—My Letter to the Prime Minister of January 5—Fate of the Second Attempt to Make a Tank—Failure of the Third Attempt: the Trench Roller—The Duke of Westminster's Dinner—The Project Revived—The Landships Committee Formed—Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt's Design—The Tanks Ordered—Credit and Responsibility—The Tanks in Jeopardy, June, 1915—The Mother Tank Survives—Lord Dundonald and His Grandfather's Secret—He Reveals It—Noxious Gas—Correspondence—Smoke—An Anticipation: The True Use of Tanks—'Variants of the Offensive'—The Conception of the Battle of Cambrai—Surprise—Premature Exposure of the Tanks—Their Mishandling by G.H.Q.—The Battle of Cambrai, 1917—The Tanks Established.

I HAVE narrated in the First Volume the sequence of events which led to the first attempt to make an armoured vehicle capable of crossing trenches. The Admiralty were asked to assume responsibility for the defence of Britain against aerial attack. This necessitated the posting on the Belgian and French coasts of Air Squadrons based on Dunkirk to attack any Zeppelin or aeroplane shed which the enemy might establish in the invaded territories. This led to the formation of armoured-car squadrons to protect the advanced bases which our naval aeroplanes might require to use. The enemy, harassed by the armoured cars, cut gaps in the roads, and I called immediately for means of bridging these gaps. Meanwhile the armoured cars began to multiply, but just as they became numerous and efficient, the trench lines on both sides reached the sea, and there was no longer any open ground for manœuvre or any flanks to turn. As we could not go round the trenches, it was evidently necessary to go over them. This was the point which the chain of causation had reached in the second week of October, 1914.

Since Admiral Bacon had retired from the Navy, he had become general manager of the Coventry Ordnance Works. In 1913 I had kept this firm, which comprised one third of our heavy-gun-producing power, alive by assigning it some of the 15-inch guns and turrets for the fast battleships. A few days after the war had begun I received a letter from Admiral Bacon stating that he had designed a 15-inch howitzer that could be transported by road. Interested in this astonishing assertion, I sent for him. He then spoke with energy and conviction about the general artillery aspects of the war, predicting in particular that existing fortresses would not be able to withstand the shells of great modern cannon or howitzers which were far more formidable than any contemplated at the date of their construction. I listened with interest, and when during the next fortnight the forts first of Liège and then of Namur were swiftly destroyed by the German siege guns, I sent for Admiral Bacon again. I told him his prediction had come true, and I asked whether he could make some big howitzers for the British Army, and how long it would take. He replied he could make a 15-inch howitzer in five months and thereafter deliver one every fortnight. I thereupon proposed to the War Office to order ten.

General von Donop, the Master General, was staggered at the idea of 'this novel piece of ordnance,' and expressed doubts whether it could be made or would be useful when made. But Lord Kitchener was much attracted by the idea, and the order went forward forthwith. I promised Admiral Bacon that if he completed his howitzers in the incredibly short time fixed, he should himself command them in France. The utmost expedition was therefore assured, and in fact the first of these monsters, though not ordered till after the fall of Namur, fired in the battle of Neuve Chapelle.

I was kept closely informed about their design and progress, and at the outset learned that each one with its ammunition and platform would be moved in the field in sections, by eight

enormous caterpillar tractors. The pictures of these vehicles were extremely suggestive, and when Admiral Bacon showed them to me in October, I at once asked whether they would be able to cross trenches and carry guns and fighting men, or whether he could make any that would. As the result of the discussion that followed, Admiral Bacon produced a design for a caterpillar tractor which would cross a trench by means of a portable bridge which it laid down before itself and hauled up after passing over; and early in November, 1914, I directed him to make an experimental machine, and to lay the project before both Sir John French and Lord Kitchener meanwhile. On February 13, 1915, the model showing promise, I ordered thirty to be constructed. It was not until May, 1915, that the first of these engines with the bridging device was tested by the War Office. It was then rejected because it could not descend a four-foot bank and go through three feet of water (a feat not achieved by any tank up to the end of the war) or fulfil other extremely severe and indeed vexatious conditions. My order for the thirty had, however, been cancelled before their trial took place, as by that time we had achieved a better design through an altogether different agency. Thus ended the first and earliest effort to make a trench-crossing vehicle or so-called 'Tank' during the Great War.

The sequence of events in the second attempt to make a tank and secure its adoption by the military authorities was as follows:—

Quite independently of what has been narrated above, about the middle or end of October, Colonel E. D. Swinton, who was attached to General Headquarters, France, as Eye-Witness or Official Correspondent, also realised and visualised the need of such a weapon. He accordingly broached the project to Colonel Hankey.[1] At the end of December, Colonel Hankey wrote a paper on the need of this and other mechanical devices,

[1] Afterwards Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence and at this time of the War Council.

which he circulated to the various Members of the Cabinet directly concerned in the conduct of the war.

Reading this paper brought me back to the subject on which Admiral Bacon had already been given instructions, and on January 5 I wrote the following letter to the Prime Minister:—

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Asquith.

January 5, 1915.

I entirely agree with Colonel Hankey's remarks on the subject of special mechanical devices for taking trenches. It is extraordinary that the Army in the Field and the War Office should have allowed nearly three months of trench warfare to progress without addressing their minds to its special problems.

The present war has revolutionised all military theories about the field of fire. The power of the rifle is so great that 100 yards is held sufficient to stop any rush, and in order to avoid the severity of the artillery fire, trenches are often dug on the reverse slope of positions, or a short distance in the rear of villages, woods or other obstacles. The consequence is that the war has become a short range instead of a long range war as was expected, and opposing trenches get ever closer together for mutual safety from each other's artillery fire. The question to be solved is not therefore the long attack over a carefully prepared glacis of former times, but the actual getting across of 100 or 200 yards of open space and wire entanglements. All this was apparent more than two months ago, but no steps have been taken and no preparation made. It would be quite easy in a short time to fit up a number of steam tractors with small armoured shelters, in which men and machine guns could be placed, which would be bullet-proof. Used at night they would not be affected by artillery fire to any extent. The caterpillar system would enable trenches to be crossed quite easily, and the weight of the machine would destroy all wire entanglements. Forty or fifty of these engines prepared secretly and brought into position at nightfall could advance quite certainly into the enemy's trenches, smashing away all the obstructions and sweeping the trenches with their machine-gun fire and with grenades thrown out of the top. They would then make so many *points d'appui* for the British supporting infantry to rush forward and rally on them.

They can then move forward to attack the second line of trenches. The cost would be small. If the experiment did not answer, what harm would be done? An obvious measure of prudence would have been to have started something like this two months ago. It should certainly be done now.

The shield is another obvious experiment which should have been made on a considerable scale. What does it matter which is the best pattern? A large number should have been made of various patterns; some to carry, some to wear, some to wheel. If the mud now prevents the workings of shields or traction engines, the first frost would render them fully effective. With a view to this I ordered a month ago twenty shields on wheels to be made on the best design the Naval Air Service could devise. These will be ready shortly, and can, if necessary, be used for experimental purposes.

A third device which should be used systematically and on a large scale is smoke artificially produced. It is possible to make small smoke barrels which on being lighted generate a great column of dense black smoke which could be turned off or on at will. There are other matters closely connected with this to which I have already drawn your attention, but which are of so secret a character that I do not put them down on paper.

One of the most serious dangers that we are exposed to is the possibility that the Germans are acting and [are] preparing all these surprises, and that we may at any time find ourselves exposed to some entirely new form of attack. A committee of engineer officers and other experts ought to be sitting continually at the War Office to formulate schemes and examine suggestions, and I would repeat that it is not possible in most cases to have lengthy experiments beforehand. If the devices are to be ready by the time they are required it is indispensable that manufacture should proceed simultaneously with experiment. The worst that can happen is that a comparatively small sum of money is wasted.

Mr. Asquith, two or three days after receiving my letter of January 5, laid it personally before Lord Kitchener, and urged him strongly to prosecute research into all these matters. Lord Kitchener, who was entirely favourable, thereupon re-

mitted the project to the Department of the Master General of the Ordnance. Its fate was there determined by the following minutes in which, after seven weeks' reflection, the high technical and professional authorities recorded their opinions.

February 26, 1915.

I have discussed this matter with . . . and am of opinion that the project is not likely to lead to success on account (1) of the time it would take to design and make sufficient of the machines suggested (2) the great weights involved (3) the vulnerability to gun fire and (4) the difficulty of movement over the ground likely to be occupied by the enemy. I may be wrong and perhaps I should be convinced otherwise were I to see the design which any competent person would be prepared to submit. Would you in consultation with Colonel . . . like to submit the name of a competent designer to whom the conditions could be submitted?

March 1, 1915.

Can you suggest the name of any person competent to design a land cruiser, not too heavy, that will cross any ordinary country and negotiate the usual fences? I do not myself know of any, but perhaps the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers could advise.

March 1, 1915.

I am afraid I cannot. The only firm in this Country who have had any experience in this line are Hornsbys of Grantham.

These minutes were mortal to the second attempt to make a Tank, and the project was decently interred in the archives of the War Office.

I did not know what had happened as a result of my letter to the Prime Minister, or what the War Office were doing; but I formed the impression that no real progress was being made, and that the military authorities were quite unconvinced either of the practicability of making such engines or of their value when made. I, however, continued to think about the subject from time to time whenever the very great pressure of Admiralty and public business afforded an oppor-

tunity. Accordingly, on January 19, 1915, I sent a minute to the Director of the Air Division instructing him to make certain experiments with steam rollers with a view to smashing in the trenches of the enemy by the mere weight of the engine.[1] I had of course no expert knowledge of mechanics, and could only give or foster ideas of a suggestive character and provide funds and give orders for experiments and action. This particular variant (which was mentioned in Colonel Hankey's paper of December 28) broke down through its mechanical defects, but there is no doubt that it played its part in forming opinions among the armoured-car officers and experts connected with the armoured-car squadrons and in setting imagination to work for other and more helpful solutions.

So here are three quite separate efforts to procure the manufacture and adoption of the kind of vehicles afterwards called 'Tanks,' all of which had been brought to failure either by mechanical defects or by official obstruction. This deadlock might well have continued for an indefinite period of time. No demand for such weapons had come, or for many months came, from the military authorities in France: every suggestion from civilian or other quarters had been turned down by the War Office. The Dardanelles operations were beginning, and almost every hour of my day was occupied with grave Admiralty business. However, the Duke of Westminster, who commanded a squadron of armoured cars and who was himself a focus of discussion on these subjects, invited me to dine on February 17 to meet several officers from the armoured-car squadrons. The conversation turned on cross-country armoured vehicles, and Major Hetherington, who also belonged to the armoured-car squadrons and knew of the various experiments which had been made, spoke with force and vision on the whole subject, advocating the creation of land battleships on a scale far larger than has ever been found practicable.

[1] See Appendix III, p.

As a result of this conversation, I went home determined that I would give imperative orders without delay to secure the carrying forward in one form or another of the project in which I had so long believed. Accordingly I directed Major Hetherington to submit his plans, which were at that time for a platform mounted on enormous wheels 40 feet in diameter, and I forwarded these plans two days later to the First Sea Lord (Lord Fisher) urging him to devote his great energies and mechanical aptitudes to getting them carried through. In addition to this, the next day, the 20th, I sent for Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt,[1] the Chief Constructor of the Navy, and convened a conference which, as I was ill at the time, was held in my bedroom at the Admiralty on the afternoon of that day. As the result of it the Landships Committee of the Admiralty was formed by my orders, under the Presidency of Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt, reporting direct to me, and they were urged in the most strenuous manner to labour to the very utmost to secure a solution of the problem.

From the formation of this committee on February 20, 1915, till the appearance of tanks in action in August, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, there is an unbroken chain of causation.

On March 20, Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt reported to me that his committee had evolved two possible types, much smaller than Major Hetherington had imagined, one moved by large wheels and the other by caterpillar action. I immediately called by minute for estimates of time and money.

March 20, 1915.

Most urgent. Special Report to me in case of delay. Estimates of time and money.

W. S. C.

These were supplied, and on March 26 I took the responsibility for ordering eighteen of these vehicles, which at that

[1] Afterwards Sir Eustace Tennyson-d'Eyncourt.

time were called landships, six of which were to be of the wheel type and twelve of the caterpillar type.

March 26, 1915.

Proceed as proposed and with all despatch. On account of secrecy this may be taken as sanction.

W. S. C.

I thus took personal responsibility for the expenditure of the public money involved, about £70,000. I did not invite the Board of Admiralty to share this responsibility with me. I did not inform the War Office, for I knew they would raise objections to my interference in this sphere, and I knew by this time that the Department of the Master General of the Ordnance was not very receptive of such ideas. Neither did I inform the Treasury.

It was a serious decision to spend this large sum of money on a project so speculative, about the merits of which no high expert military or naval authority had been convinced. The matter, moreover, was entirely outside the scope of my own Department or of any normal powers which I possessed. Had the tanks proved wholly abortive or never been accepted or never used in war by the military authorities, and had I been subsequently summoned before a Parliamentary Committee, I could have offered no effective defence to the charge that I had wasted public money on a matter which was not in any way my business and in regard to which I had not received expert advice in any responsible military quarter. The extremely grave situation of the war, and my conviction of the need of breaking down the deadlock which blocked the production of these engines, are my defence; but that defence is only valid in view of their enormous subsequent success.

A general observation may here be made. There was no novelty about the idea of an armoured vehicle to travel across country and pass over trenches and other natural obstacles while carrying guns and fighting men. Mr. H. G. Wells, in an article written in 1903, had practically exhausted

the possibilities of imagination in this sphere. Moreover, from very early times the history of war is filled with devices of this character for use in the attack of fortresses and fortified positions. The general principles of applying the idea were also fairly obvious. Bullet-proof armour had been carried to a high point of perfection by various hardening processes. The internal-combustion engine supplied the motive power. The Pedrail and Caterpillar systems were both well known, and had been widely applied in many parts of the world. Thus the three elements out of which tanks have been principally constituted were at hand to give effect to the idea.

There are, however, two things to be kept distinct:—

(*a*) The responsibility for initiating and sustaining the action which led to the tanks being produced,

and

(*b*) the credit for solving the extremely difficult problems connected with design apart from main principles.

These services were entirely separate. There never was a moment when it was possible to say that a tank had been 'invented.' There never was a person about whom it could be said 'this man invented the tank.' But there was a moment when the actual manufacture of the first tanks was definitely ordered, and there was a moment when an effective machine was designed as the direct outcome of this authorisation.

I consider that the responsibility for the mechanical execution of the project was borne by Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt. Without his high authority and immense expert knowledge the project could not have been carried to success. Under his guidance, invaluable services in the sphere of adaptation and manufacture were rendered by Sir William Tritton and Major Wilson. But I sanctioned the expenditure of public money in reliance upon Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt's gifts and knowledge, and his assurances that the mechanical difficulties could be solved. I trusted him, as I would have trusted Admiral

Bacon in the earlier project, to say whether the thing could be done or not and to find a way round and through the technical difficulties. And once he said it could be done, I was prepared to incur both risk and responsibility in providing the necessary funds and in issuing the necessary authority. It was with him alone that I dealt, and it was from me alone that he received his orders.

Others, such as Colonel Swinton and Captain T. G. Tulloch had seized the idea and had even laid specific proposals before the War Office in January, 1915. These officers had not however the executive authority which alone could ensure progress and their efforts were brought to nothing by the obstruction of some of their superiors. They were unfortunate in not being able to command the resources necessary for action, or to convince those who had the power to act.

After I left the Admiralty at the end of May, 1915, another moment of extreme peril threatened the enterprise. The new Board of Admiralty included three out of the four naval members of the old Board. Reinforced by Sir Henry Jackson, the new First Sea Lord, they appear to have viewed the financial commitments which had already been incurred to an extent of about £45,000 as either undesirable or wholly beyond the sphere of Admiralty interests. They therefore, in the general disfavour in which my affairs were at this time involved, proposed to terminate the contracts and scrap the whole project. However, Mr. Tennyson-d'Eyncourt remained faithful to the charge I had laid upon him. He warned me of the decisions which were impending, or which had perhaps been taken, and I thereupon as a Member of the War Committee of the Cabinet appealed personally to Mr. Balfour, the new First Lord. After consideration, Mr. Balfour decided that the construction of one experimental machine should be proceeded with. One alone survived. But this proved to be the 'Mother Tank' which, displayed in Hatfield Park in January, 1916, became the exact model of the tanks which fought on the Somme in

August, 1916, and was the parent and in principle the prototype of all the heavy tanks that fought in the Great War.

* * * * *

The paragraph in my letter of January 5 to the Prime Minister upon the use of smoke and the reference to secrets which lay behind it, also requires a digression.

Early in September, 1914, Lieutenant-General Lord Dundonald, the grandson of the famous Admiral Cochrane, spoke to Lord Kitchener of various plans left by his ancestor for making smoke screens, and also for driving an enemy from his position by means of noxious though not necessarily deadly fumes. 'Lord Kitchener,' writes Lord Dundonald, 'at once told me that he did not consider that the plans were of any use for land operations, and as they were invented by an Admiral, I had better see the Admiralty about them.'[1] Lord Dundonald therefore obtained an introduction to the Second Sea Lord, Sir Frederick Hamilton, with whom he had an interview on September 28. The Second Sea Lord was generally favourable, and wrote (September 29) 'I have talked the matter over with Prince Louis and he thinks you had better see Churchill and not mention us.' I had served in Lord Dundonald's Brigade in South Africa during the Relief of Ladysmith, and I at once made an appointment to receive him. I was immediately interested in his ideas, and asked to see the plans of the illustrious Cochrane. Lord Dundonald replied after a few days' consideration that he felt that the national emergency at last justified him in revealing the secret which he had guarded all his life, and in the middle of October he brought me the historic papers which once before, in the Crimean War, had been placed at the disposal of the British Government. On the inner covering of the packet in the delicate writing of the old Admiral, were the words, 'To the

[1] Memorandum of the Earl of Dundonald. (Unpublished.)

Imperial mind one sentence will suffice: All Fortifications, especially marine Fortifications, can under cover of dense smoke be irresistibly subdued by fumes of sulphur kindled in masses to windward of their ramparts.' The reader, captivated by the compliment, will no doubt rise to the occasion and grasp at once the full significance of the idea. I sent for the First Sea Lord (Prince Louis of Battenberg) without delay and we had a prolonged discussion.

I now cast about for means of exploring the subject without endangering its secrecy. In the first instance I had recourse to Sir Arthur Wilson, whose practical and inventive turn of mind seemed specially adapted to the task. The results were, however, negative.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Dundonald.

October 18, 1914.

Sir Arthur Wilson thought the scheme obsolete on account of modern conditions, and it was useless to pursue it with him. *I* do not share these views and am considering how and when progress may be made. Meanwhile, with many thanks, I return you your most interesting documents.

Lord Dundonald to Mr. Churchill.

October 24, 1914.

The term 'obsolete' does not describe a novel departure. You, I know, place an accurate value on the criticism. I must trust that the Secret will be maintained by the Officers to whom you entrust it. . . . I feel sure that you will help my wish to conduct land operations under the plan if agreed that the Navy is out of it.

During the weeks that followed Lord Dundonald continued to send me admirable suggestions, based on his grandfather's ideas, and, after giving decisive instructions to make experiments, I continued to endeavour to secure in secrecy powerful professional endorsement. For instance:—

Lord Dundonald to Mr. Churchill.

October, 1914.

This method of warfare once divulged can of course be employed by any nation, but as far as it is possible to foresee, an Island Nation with the command of the Sea need fear little, but on the contrary may gain much.

Since these plans were invented by Admiral Lord Dundonald in 1811 (two years after he had conducted the explosion and fire ships in Basque Roads) certain factors which must facilitate their employment have been evolved, such as mechanically driven vessels, horseless vehicles, rapidity of communication, and noxious fume-proof helmets.

The successful use of the plan above all depends on a favourable wind. . . . The wind statistics from the coast of Holland to Berlin show that the wind from [westerly directions] is far more prevalent than from the opposite or eastern section of the compass, especially is this so during November, December, January and February. . . .

. . . The vehicles with sulphur would be conducted and operated by men in Gas-proof helmets. . . .

An attack against miles of entrenchment would be made on sectional fronts by sulphur and smoke, the intervening blocks where sulphur would not be employed being smoked only, in order to blind the hostile artillery.

There can be no question but that Lord Dundonald had grasped at this time the whole idea of gas and smoke warfare, and that he had derived it directly from the papers of his grandfather. To these conceptions modern chemistry offered terrible possibilities. The use of noxious or poisonous fumes was explicitly prohibited by International Law. We could not therefore employ it ourselves unless and until the enemy himself began. But when from time to time, amid the rush of the War, I turned my mind to this subject, and thought of German chemical science and German mentality, I became increasingly disquieted. As it was very difficult to obtain any high Military or Naval assistance, and I had not the life and strength to carry this additional load of thought myself, I turned to another quarter.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Dundonald.

January 1, 1915.

After very careful consideration I think you should lay your Grandfather's scheme before Colonel Hankey, the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence. He has himself been pursuing considerable investigations in a similar though not identical direction.

I notice also with some misgiving attempts by the German Government to purchase sulphur on an exceptionally large scale.

The enormous pressure of the War upon those engaged in conducting it made progress very slow, but on March 15 Colonel Hankey, who had been making himself some experiments, wrote to Lord Dundonald that: 'In connection with the Dardanelles operations it may be desirable in certain circumstances to produce a large smoke screen.' I now found Admiralty affairs directly affected, and on March 21 I ordered a strong technical Committee on the subject to be formed under the presidency of Lord Dundonald. I made it clear, however, that we could not depart from the accepted Laws of War.

Mr. Masterton-Smith [1] *to Lord Dundonald.*

March 31, 1915.

Mr. Churchill asked me to write and confirm a decision already communicated to you by Colonel Hankey, that while the smoke experiments are to be continued it is not intended for the present to proceed with the more important proposal [i.e., experiments in noxious fumes]. Mr. Churchill agrees that it would not be expedient to introduce into the War, elements which might justify the enemy in having recourse to inhuman reprisals. At the same time Mr. Churchill wishes me to convey to you his sense of deep obligation for the ungrudging manner in which you have placed at his disposal your exceptional knowledge.

[1] My private Secretary: now Sir James Masterton-Smith.

I now kept in close touch with the work of the Committee, but progress, even in the limited sphere to which we were confined by International Law and State Policy, was slow and fitful.

SMOKE. *April* 5, 1915.

We are simply pottering with this subject, which my reflections increasingly lead me to suppose is fraught with most hopeful possibilities, both as regards operations on land and especially at sea.

Action must now proceed at once. Let the ten best recipes for smoke mixture be made up into large barrels or other receptacles, and let these be taken during this week to Eastchurch or the Isle of Grain, or some other convenient place, and have them lighted up one after the other. I will endeavour myself to attend to witness the experiments.

Let fifteen or twenty suitable small craft be selected and the names submitted to form the home service smoke-burning flotilla. Let also twenty of those big Belgian canal barges be selected and prepared as destructible smoke-ships. Let all these vessels be filled with what is ascertained to be the best smoke mixture. Probably 5,000 or 6,000 tons of material will be required. Let tugs be earmarked for service with these vessels when required. Let all preparations of vessels proceed in anticipation of the choice of smoke mixture and of the purchase of smoke material. Let small steamboats be earmarked for attendance on the flotilla when required.

For land service, let a lorry capable of being towed or pushed by an armoured car be designed, on which lorry a large smoke-burning furnace or kiln of iron can be erected. It is essential that this furnace should be capable of being immediately closed so as to stop combustion and turn off the smoke at any moment. Let proposals be put forward for obtaining 100 of these, by whatever means will least interfere with production for existing services. Make sure, however, that the naval part of this work is not delayed or impeded on account of the land part.

W. S. C.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John French.

April 10, 1915.

I have seen some wonderful smoke-making experiments carried out by my directions. A light portable metal cone of the simplest construction 3 feet high and 6 feet wide at the base is fed by gravity at the base with benzol. The oil spreads over the surface of the cone, causing a dense smoke which you can turn off instantaneously by a tap on the fuel supply.

I am developing this system for naval purposes, but my reflections lead me increasingly to believe in its importance in the kind of warfare you are now waging. If the wind were favourable, you could blanket off absolutely in a few minutes a whole sector of the enemy's artillery and rifle fire. You could use it to cut out a particular village or line of trenches till your men were actually upon them with the bayonet. Or again you could cover the bringing up to the decisive point of a large mass of cavalry at the critical moment.

I imagine the whole apparatus with smoke for 2 hours, capable of blanketing off half a mile of ground and putting a much wider area in haze, could be carried on a motor lorry; and if this were protected by a light plating it could run right up in advance of the troops to the required point.

They showed me at Woolwich barrels of another mixture, solid, which they had prepared for the army in the field but which had never been asked for. It made a fine smoke; but the new method is preferable because of its greater mobility and the power of turning it off and on at any moment. If you like, I can make an experimental outfit of one car and send it across for you to see.

On April 22, 1915, the Germans, violating the Laws of War, made their first poison-gas attack, and the second battle of Ypres began. This crime and folly was destined in the end to expose them to severe retaliation from those who had the advantage of the prevailing winds, and in the end of the superior science; but who had hitherto been restrained by respect for international usage from turning their favourable position to account.

* * * * *

There is one further stage in the tale of the Tanks to be described, and for this I must considerably anticipate chronology. When I resigned from the Cabinet in November, 1915, in circumstances which will be presently related, and joined the Army in France, I conceived myself to be the bearer to them of a good gift. This gift was the conception of a battle and of a victory; and I knew that the Commander-in-Chief, Sir John French, would study the proposals I submitted with deep and friendly attention. Accordingly on arrival at General Headquarters I drew up a paper called 'Variants of the Offensive,' which was printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. I laid this before Sir John French, and later before his successor, Sir Douglas Haig. The first of these Variants may be quoted here.

Secret.

MEMORANDUM BY MAJOR THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

December 3, 1915.

VARIANTS OF THE OFFENSIVE.

I.—*The Attack by Armour.*

1. DURING the winter both sides will tend to reduce their forces in the front line to a minimum and rely chiefly on wire and machine guns. The problem of crossing two or three hundred yards of ground without undue loss and in superior force along a considerable front ought not to present insuperable difficulties. It has been found necessary in naval war to protect above all things the motive power of ships; and the vital organs of men ought similarly to be protected whenever possible. Where conditions of manœuvre prevail and armies move fast and far across the country, armour is rightly banned as hampering mobility. But for the specific object of protecting men from machine-gun bullets during the short walk across from trench to trench *shields* are indispensable.

2. Shields may be either carried individually or pushed by several men. In the former case they should be lined along the parapet and picked up by the men on the signal to advance. They should be curved, oblong, steel plates, and should hang on the left shoulder, giving protection from just below the rim of the steel helmet to the hips. They should be discarded on reaching the enemy's trench.

Composite shields covering from five to fifteen men, and pushed along either on a wheel or, still better, on a Caterpillar, should also be used. Models can be inspected at Wormwood Scrubbs of various types. . . .

3. *Caterpillars.*

The cutting of the enemy's wire and the general domination of his firing-line can be effected by engines of this character. About seventy are now nearing completion in England, and should be inspected. None should be used until all can be used at once. They should be disposed secretly along the whole attacking front two or three hundred yards apart. Ten or fifteen minutes before the assault these engines should move forward over the best line of advance open, passing through or across our trenches at prepared points. They are capable of traversing any ordinary obstacle, ditch, breastwork, or trench. They carry two or three Maxims each, and can be fitted with flame apparatus. Nothing but a direct hit from a field gun will stop them. On reaching the enemy's wire they turn to the left or right and run down parallel to the enemy's trench, sweeping his parapet with their fire, and crushing and cutting the barbed wire in lanes and in a slightly serpentine course. While doing this the Caterpillars will be so close to the enemy's line that they will be immune from his artillery. Through the gaps thus made the shield-bearing infantry will advance.

If artillery is used to cut wire, the direction and imminence of the attack is proclaimed days beforehand. But by this method the assault follows the wire-cutting almost immediately, i.e., before any reinforcements can be brought up by the enemy, or any special defensive measures taken.[1]

4. The Caterpillars are capable of actually crossing the enemy's trench and advancing to cut his communication

[1] The italics are new.

trenches; but into this aspect it is not necessary to go now. One step at a time. It will be easy, when the enemy's front line is in our hands, to find the best places for the Caterpillars to cross by for any further advance which may be required. They can climb any slope. They are, in short, movable machine-gun cupolas as well as wire-smashers. The naval torpedo-net-cutter, fixed in front of them with guides to lead the gathered wires into it, has proved absolutely successful. The spectacle of such a machine cutting wire entanglements has only to be witnessed to carry conviction. It resembles the reaping operations of a self-binder. Three or four days' notice to the Trench Warfare Department should enable this demonstration to be made.

5. It is obvious that the above form of attack requires, at the present season, frost, darkness, and surprise. The parry to the Caterpillar is either protective mining galleries, fougasses, buried shells, etc., or field guns concealed in the parapet. But if this trick works once, a new one can be devised for next time. Until these machines are actually in France, it is not possible to measure the full limit of their powers. But it is believed that during the dark hours of a winter's night not one but several successive lines of trenches could be taken by their agency. As they moved forward into the enemy's positions, his artillery would be increasingly hampered in firing at them, and, with deepening confusion, the location of and laying the guns upon these moving structures will become almost impossible. Daylight would leave them an easy prey;[1] but if daylight witnessed an entirely new situation they would have done their part, even if they could not be withdrawn. They would, as they advanced, carry the infantry attack along with them and serve as movable *points d'appui*, guiding and defining the attack.

6. Surprise consists in novelty and suddenness. Secrecy is vital, and it should be possible, over a period of three or four weeks, to work routine conditions into such a state that very little extraordinary preparation would be required. The weak man-power available in the enemy's front line can easily be overwhelmed by forces which might appear to be assembled in the ordinary course. If the troops holding our line are gradually strengthened, and our moment of relief made to

[1] I underrated their immunity.

miss the enemy's moment of relief, sufficient force for taking the enemy's first lines should be obtained.

The necessary movement of supports and reserves, and the rôle of our artillery, belong to the regular offensive and are not dealt with in these notes on 'variants.' It is worth while considering, however, whether the advance of supports and reserves by night, especially after the enemy's line is reached, could not be directed by searchlight beams shot from the rear, each brigade pursuing generally the line of the light assigned to it. In this way strong bodies can be guided to definite points and stopped by switching off the light, whatever the confusion or breakdown of signals.

7. The conception of this attack involves the simultaneous employment of all the *armour* devices above mentioned. On no one in particular must we be solely dependent. The individual shield-bearing soldiers must have their own implements for cutting or crossing the wire. The composite shields must blanket-off the machine guns. The Caterpillars are an addition, good in themselves, but better and sure in combination. Above all *surprise*.

The scheme of attack by caterpillar vehicles thus unfolded was not put into operation until the first Battle of Cambrai in November, 1917. In the light of years of experience many errors can be detected in this forecast; but it might well have served as a basis for intense military study. Three months later, in February, 1916, Colonel Swinton, who was then serving on the Secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and had witnessed the early trials of 'Mother Tank,' set forth and printed in careful and accurate detail the plan of a Tank battle on a great scale. In spite of this it took the High Command nearly two whole years more to learn to use tanks in the manner and conditions for which they were originally conceived. During the interval every conceivable mistake was committed, which lack of comprehension could suggest. The first twenty tanks, in spite of my protests and the far more potent objections of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, were improvidently exposed to the enemy at the Battle of the

Somme. The immense advantage of novelty and surprise was thus squandered while the number of the tanks was small, while their condition was experimental and their crews almost untrained. This priceless conception, containing, if used in its integrity and on a sufficient scale, the certainty of a great and brilliant victory, was revealed to the Germans for the mere petty purpose of taking a few ruined villages. Mercifully the high military authorities of all countries belonged to the same school of thought. The revelation passed unappreciated by the German Command. Though full of novelty and terror, the tank could no longer be an apparition, but at least we were not ourselves confronted with German tanks in large numbers in 1917.

That year was to witness the further misuse of the British tank. Instead of employing them all at once in dry weather on ground not torn by bombardment, in some new sector where they could operate very easily and by surprise, they were plunged in fours and fives as a mere minor adjunct of the infantry into the quagmires and crater-fields of Passchendaele. The enemy was familiarised with them by their piecemeal use; and they themselves were brought wallowing to a standstill in the mud. Indeed at the end of 1917 many high authorities in the British Army had become almost convinced that they were useless, and gilded wiseacres were beginning to unearth again their original condemnations of such unprofessional expedients. Fortunately, the mishandling of the tanks and their consequent failure produced a similar impression on the German mind, and once again the enemy lost the opportunity of hoisting us 'with our own petard.'

In spite of the reasoning of two years before and the steady appeals and arguments of the officers of the Tank Corps, it was not until Passchendaele was over that the tanks were given their chance. They were at last to have their own battle. They were at last to be allowed to show that they could destroy wire without a bombardment which would warn

the enemy, and consequently restore the element of surprise to a modern offensive. To General Byng fell the honour of organising the Battle of Cambrai which began on November 20, 1917. Tardily and doubtingly as they were used, the results were decisive. In a few hours a victory was gained almost without loss. However, as no adequate preparations had been made to exploit it, the after consequences were disappointing, and even a few days later disastrous. It was not until 1918 that the combination of smoke with tanks, and the use of smoke to cover the advance of numbers of tanks, were actually adopted in the field. Had the war continued into 1919, every tank would have possessed the means of making its own smoke, and all tank operations would have been conducted under clouds of artificial fog. But after the Battle of Cambrai the fame of the tanks was secure, and henceforward throughout 1918 they became to the eyes of friend and foe alike, the great decisive weapon and distinctive feature of the British, French and American offensives.

CHAPTER V

THE CHOICE

The Southern Flank—The Russian Appeal—Lord Kitchener's Letter of January 2—Lord Fisher's Letter of January 3—A Consensus of Opinion—Telegram to Vice-Admiral Carden, January 3—Minutes of the First Lord and the First Sea Lord—Our General Agreement—Vice-Admiral Carden's Reply—Views of the Staff—Lord Fisher's Position at This Stage—Vice-Admiral Carden's Plan, January 11—Its Favourable Reception—The *Queen Elizabeth*—The Technical Aspect—The Two New Factors in the Dardanelles Problem—Accuracy of Naval Artillery—Sir Arthur Wilson's Views—The Gunnery Question—I Call for Definite Plans—The Available Fleet—The War Council of January 13—The Decision—Proposed Action in the Adriatic—Minute of January 13—Ammunition Reserves—Sir Henry Jackson's Memorandum of January 15—Negotiations with the French and Russian Governments—Minute of January 20—The Alexandretta Loophole—Genesis of the Naval Plan—The Responsibilities.

AT the end of the year 1914 various attempts were made to survey the general situation and make plans for the spring. On January 1 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, circulated a paper of the highest importance, drawing attention to the unfounded optimism which prevailed about the war situation, to the increasing failure of Russia as a prime factor, and to the need for action in the Balkan Peninsula to rally Greece and Bulgaria to the cause of the Allies. There was also a pregnant and prescient Memorandum by Colonel Hankey, which is referred to in the Report of the Dardanelles Commission. Both these papers pointed to the Near East as the true field for our action and initiative in 1915. After reading advance copies of these documents I forwarded the latter on December 31 to the Prime Minister, saying:—

We are substantially in agreement, and our conclusions are not incompatible.

I wanted Gallipoli attacked on the declaration of war. . . . Meanwhile the difficulties have increased. . . . I think the War Council ought to meet daily for a few days next week. No topic can be pursued to any fruitful result at weekly intervals.

On January 2 I received the following letter from Lord Kitchener:—

You have no doubt seen Buchanan's telegram about the Russians and Turks; if not FitzGerald is taking it over.

Do you think any naval action would be possible to prevent [the] Turks sending more men into the Caucasus and thus denuding Constantinople?

With this note, Colonel Fitzgerald brought the telegram from which following extract is relevant:—

Early this week the position of Russians in the Caucasus gave cause for grave anxiety, Turks having commenced enveloping movement seriously threatening Russian forces. Commander-in-Chief of the Army in the Caucasus pressed most urgently for reinforcements, many Caucasian troops being now employed against Germans, but Grand Duke has told him he must manage to keep on as he is. Grand Duke sent for General Williams[1] on Wednesday and officially informed him of above, and told him he was determined to proceed with his present plans against Germany and keep them unaltered.

IVth Siberian Army Corps is now on the way to Warsaw, and will be joined by Guard Army Corps, when it is hoped to continue active operations against Germans, and thus help to ease position of Allies, although in ordinary course it would be natural to send Caucasians to Turkish front.

Grand Duke, however, asked if it would be possible for Lord Kitchener to arrange for a demonstration of some kind against Turks elsewhere, either naval or military, and to spread reports which would cause Turks, who he says are very liable to go off at

[1] Brigadier-General Sir John Hanbury-Williams.

a tangent, to withdraw some of the forces now acting against Russians in the Caucasus, and thus ease the position of Russians.[1]

Grand Duke added that, even if Lord Kitchener was unable to help, he should stick to his present plans.

Later in the day Lord Kitchener came over himself to see me at the Admiralty, and we had a full discussion on the Russian telegram and whether the Navy could do anything to help. All the possible alternatives in the Turkish theatre were mentioned. We both had in mind our discussions of November on the possibilities of a descent from Egypt upon Gallipoli. We both saw clearly the far-reaching consequences of a successful attack upon Constantinople. If there was any prospect of a serious attempt to force the Straits of the Dardanelles at a later stage, it would be in the highest degree improvident to stir them up for the sake of a mere demonstration. I put this point forward, and suggested alternative diversions to help the Russians. Lord Kitchener did not dissent from the argument, but he returned steadily and decidedly to the statement that he had no troops to spare, and could not face a large new expansion of our military commitments. I have no record of this conversation, but my recollection of it is confirmed by the second letter which I received from Lord Kitchener on this same day (January 2).

Lord Kitchener to Mr. Churchill.

January 2, 1915.

I do not see that we can do anything that will very seriously help the Russians in the Caucasus.

The Turks are evidently withdrawing most of their troops from Adrianople and using them to reinforce their army against Russia, probably sending them by the Black Sea.

In the Caucasus and Northern Persia the Russians are in a bad way.

We have no troops to land anywhere. A demonstration at Smyrna would do no good and probably cause the slaughter of Christians. Alexandretta has already been tried, and would

[1] The italics are mine.

have no great effect a second time. The coast of Syria would have no effect. The only place that a demonstration might have some effect in stopping reinforcements going East would be the Dardanelles. Particularly if, as the Grand Duke says, reports could be spread at the same time that Constantinople was threatened.

We shall not be ready for anything big for some months.

On the same day Lord Kitchener, as the result no doubt of the conversation which he had had with me, sent through the Foreign Office the following telegram to Petrograd:—

Please assure the Grand Duke that steps will be taken to make a demonstration against the Turks. It is, however, feared that any action we can devise and carry out will be unlikely to seriously affect numbers of enemy in the Caucasus, or cause their withdrawal.

This telegram committed us to a demonstration against the Turks of some kind or another, but it did not commit us in respect of its direction, character or scope. It was the least that could have been said in answer to a request of a hard-pressed Ally.

The next morning (January 3) Lord Fisher entered the field. He had been considering all these matters, had read the various Cabinet papers and the Russian telegram, and had full knowledge of my conversation with Lord Kitchener. The letter which he now sent me is of great importance. It reveals Lord Fisher's position fully and clearly. The turbulence of its style in no way affects the shrewdness and profundity of its vision. I do not think that Lord Fisher ever took any action or expressed any opinions which were irreconcilable with the general principles of these first thoughts. He was always in favour of a great scheme against the Turks and to rally the Balkans. He always believed that Bulgaria was the key to the situation in this quarter. He was always prepared to risk the old battleships as part of a large naval, military and diplomatic combination. In all this we were, as his letter

shows, in entire agreement. That these large schemes were not carried into effect was not his fault nor mine.

January 3, 1915.

DEAR WINSTON,—

I've been informed by Hankey that War Council assembles next Thursday, and I suppose it will be like a game of ninepins! Every one will have a plan and one ninepin in falling will knock over its neighbour! I CONSIDER THE ATTACK ON TURKEY HOLDS THE FIELD!—but ONLY if it's IMMEDIATE! However, it won't be! Our Aulic Council will adjourn till the following Thursday fortnight! (N.B. *When did we meet last? and what came of it? ? ?*)

We shall decide on a futile bombardment of the Dardanelles which wears out the irreplaceable guns of the *Indefatigable* which probably will require replacement. What good resulted from the last bombardment? Did it move a single Turk from the Caucasus? And so the war goes on! You want ONE man!

This is the Turkey plan:—

I. Appoint Sir W. Robertson the present Quarter-master-General to command the Expeditionary Force.

II. Immediately replace all Indians and 75,000 seasoned troops from Sir John French's command with Territorials, etc., from England (as you yourself suggested) and embark this Turkish Expeditionary Force ostensibly for protection of Egypt! WITH ALL POSSIBLE DESPATCH at *Marseilles!* and land them at Besika Bay direct with previous feints before they arrive with troops now in Egypt against Haifa and Alexandretta, the latter to be a REAL occupation because of its inestimable value as regards the oil fields of the Garden of Eden, with which by rail it is in direct communication, and we shove out the Germans now established at Alexandretta with an immense Turkish concession—the last act of that arch-enemy of England Marschal von Bieberstein!

III. The Greeks to go for Gallipoli at the same time as we go for Besika, and the Bulgarians for Constantinople, and the Russians, the Serbians, and Roumanians for Austria (*all this you said yourself!*).

IV. Sturdee forces the Dardanelles at the same time with *Majestic* class and *Canopus* class! God bless him!

But as the great Napoleon said, 'CELERITY'—without it—'FAILURE'!

In the history of the world—a Junta has never won! You want *one* man!

Yours, F.

There never was the slightest chance of the whole of the Fisher plan being carried into effect. Sir William Robertson, to whom he proposed to entrust it, would presumably have advised strongly against it, his policy being, concentration in the main, or, as he would no doubt have described it, the decisive theatre. The withdrawal of the Indian Corps and 75,000 seasoned troops from Sir John French's command and their replacement by Territorial Divisions would have been resisted to the point of resignation by the Commander-in-Chief, supported by his whole staff. General Joffre and the French Government would have protested in a decisive manner. Lord Fisher's third paragraph about the Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians and Roumanians expressed exactly what everybody wanted. It was the obvious supreme objective in this part of the world. The question was, How to procure it? This was the root of the matter. It was in connection with this that Lord Fisher's fourth paragraph made its impression upon me. Here for the first time was the suggestion of forcing the Dardanelles with the old battleships.

This series of weighty representations had the effect of making me move. I thought I saw a great convergence of opinion in the direction of that attack upon the Dardanelles which I had always so greatly desired. The arguments in its favour were overwhelming. And now the highest authorities, political, naval and military, were apparently ready to put their shoulders to the wheel. All Mr. Lloyd George's advocacy and influence seemed about to be cast in the direction of Turkey and the Balkans. Though his method was different, the ultimate object, namely, the rallying of the Balkan States against Austria and Turkey, was the same, and all his arguments ap-

plied equally to either method. I knew from my talks with Mr. Balfour that he too was profoundly impressed by the advantages which might be reaped by successful action in this South-Eastern theatre. Lastly, the Foreign Office and Sir Edward Grey were, of course, keenly interested. Here was a great consensus of opinion. Here it seemed at last was a sufficient impulse and unity for action. But was there a practicable scheme? This I determined to find out, and on January 3, with the active agreement of Lord Fisher and after a talk with Sir Henry Jackson who was specially studying this theatre and advising us thereupon, I telegraphed to Vice-Admiral Carden, commanding at the Dardanelles, as follows:—

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral Carden.

January 3, 1915.

From First Lord:

Do you consider the forcing of the Dardanelles by ships alone a practicable operation?

It is assumed older battleships fitted with mine-bumpers would be used, preceded by colliers or other merchant craft as mine-bumpers and sweepers.

Importance of results would justify severe loss.

Let me know your views.

All this was purely exploratory. I did not commit myself at this stage even to the general principle of an attack upon Turkey. I wanted to see the alternatives weighed and to see what support such projects would in fact command. All our affairs at this time were complicated with the plans which, as has been explained in the last chapter, were under discussion for the advance of the Army along the coast and for the closing up of Zeebrugge.

I was still thinking a great deal of the Northern theatre, of Borkum and of the Baltic. 'We had better,' I wrote on January 4 in a note to the First Sea Lord on various points that would come up for discussion at the War Council the next day, 'hear what others have to say about the Turkish plans before

taking a decided line. I would not grudge 100,000 men, because of the great political effects in the Balkan Peninsula.' . . .

'The naval advantages,' he replied the same day, 'of the possession of Constantinople and the getting of wheat from the Black Sea are so overwhelming that I consider Colonel Hankey's plan for Turkish operations vital and imperative and very pressing.[1]

There is no doubt we could have worked together unitedly and with the utmost enthusiasm for the Southern amphibious plan, if it had been pressed forward by the War Council on a great scale and with the necessary drive and decision.

On January 5 the answer from Admiral Carden arrived. It was remarkable.

Vice-Admiral Carden to First Lord.

January 5, 1915.

With reference to your telegram of 3rd instant, I do not consider Dardanelles can be rushed.

They might be forced by extended operations with large number of ships.

At the War Council that afternoon the question of an attack on Turkey and a diversion in the Near East was one of the principal subjects discussed. Every one seemed alive to all its advantages, and Admiral Carden's telegram, which I read out, was heard with extreme interest. Its significance lay in the fact that it offered a prospect of influencing the Eastern situation in a decisive manner without opening a new military commitment on a large scale; and further it afforded an effective means of helping the Grand Duke without wasting the Dardanelles possibilities upon nothing more than a demonstration. On my return to the Admiralty I found that the idea of a gradual forcing of the Straits by extended operations was viewed with favour both by Admiral Oliver, the Chief of the

[1] The word 'plan' is hardly correct. Colonel Hankey had presented a general appreciation upon the importance of the Turkish theatre.

Staff, and by Sir Henry Jackson. I had a conversation with Sir Henry Jackson, who had that day completed a memorandum upon the question (which I read some days later). Sir Henry Jackson deprecated any attempt to rush the Straits, but he spoke of the considerable effects of the brief bombardment of November 3, and he was attracted by the idea of a step-by-step reduction of the fortresses, though troops would be needed to follow up and complete the naval attack and especially to occupy Constantinople. So here we had the Chief of the Staff, the Admiral studying this particular theatre, and the Admiral in command, all apparently in general accord in principle. This coincidence of opinion in officers so widely separated and so differently circumstanced impressed me very much, and I therefore telegraphed on January 6 to Vice-Admiral Carden as follows :—

First Lord to Admiral Carden.

January 6, 1915.

Your view is agreed with by high authorities here. Please telegraph in detail what you think could be done by extended operations, what force would be needed, and how you consider it should be used.

The 'high authorities' I had in mind were Sir Henry Jackson and the Chief of the Staff. Lord Fisher had expressed no opinion on the technical question: but of course he saw the telegram. He seemed at this time not merely to favour the enterprise in principle, but to treat it almost as a matter practically decided. On this same day he sent me a formal minute through the Chief of the Staff about the bombardment of Zeebrugge which very clearly indicates his position.

Chief of Staff. *January* 6, 1915.
First Lord.

I think before the proposed bombardment of Zeebrugge is again discussed it should be carefully considered what certain losses we have to face in capture of Borkum: in attack

on Dardanelles and forcing the passage; in Baltic operations—and (I HOPE) in landing and covering a British Army landed in the spring in Schleswig-Holstein to advance on the Kiel Canal. No one can question that whatever damage is inflicted at Zeebrugge can be quickly repaired by the Germans, unless the Army join with the Fleet to hold it. Are we going to bombard it every three weeks?

F.

P.S. I strongly supported the previous bombardment at Zeebrugge and I would strongly support it now, but have we the margin of ships in view of impending great operations? *and the men and officers!*

There was another meeting of the War Council on January 8 and prolonged discussion of the Eastern theatre. Dealing with the various alternatives, Lord Kitchener expressed an opinion in favour of an attack on the Dardanelles. He told the Council that the Dardanelles appeared to be the most suitable military objective, as an attack there could be made in co-operation with the Fleet. He estimated that 150,000 men would be sufficient for the capture of the Dardanelles, but reserved his final opinion until a close study had been made. He offered no troops and made it clear that none were available. His contribution was therefore, and was intended to be, purely theoretic.

On January 11 arrived the detailed Carden plan. It was in its details largely the work of a very able officer of Marines—Captain Godfrey (who was one of the Vice-Admiral's Staff)—and of the gunnery experts of the *Inflexible*. I set it out in full.

Vice-Admiral Carden to Admiralty.

January 11, 1915.

For First Lord:—

In reply to your telegram of 6th instant.

Reference to Naval Intelligence Department report No. 838, Turkey Coast Defence 1908. Possibility of operations:—

(A.) Total reduction of defences at the entrance.

(B.) Clear defences inside of Straits up to and including Kephez Point Battery No. 8.

(C.) Reduction of defences at the Narrows, Chanak.

(D.) Clear passage through minefield, advancing through Narrows, reducing forts above Narrows, and final advance to Marmora.

Term defences includes permanent, semi-permanent, and field works also guns or howitzers whose positions are not yet known.

Whilst (A) and (B) are being carried out a battleship force would be employed in demonstration and bombardment of Bulair lines and coast and reduction of battery near Gaba Tepe. Force required, 12 battleships, of which 4 fitted with mine-bumpers. Three battle-cruisers—2 should be available on entering Marmora—3 light cruisers, 1 flotilla leader, 16 destroyers, 1 depot repairing ship, 6 submarines, 4 seaplanes, and the *Foudre*, 12 mine-sweepers, including, perhaps, 4 fleet sweepers, 1 hospital ship, 6 colliers at Tenedos Island, 2 supply and ammunition ships. The above force allows for casualties.

Details of action:—

Frequent reconnaissance by seaplanes indispensable.

(A.) Indirect bombardment of forts, reduction completed by direct bombardment at decisive range; torpedo tubes at the entrance and guns commanding minefield destroyed; minefield cleared.

(B.) Battleships, preceded by mine-sweepers, enter Straits, working way up till position reached from which battery No. 8 can be silenced.

(C.) Severe bombardment of forts by battle-cruisers from Gaba Tepe spotted from battleships; reduction completed by direct fire at decisive range.

(D.) Battleships, preceded by sweepers, making way up towards Narrows. Forts 22, 23, 24 first bombarded from Gaba Tepe, spotting for 22 by seaplanes, then direct fire. Sweep minefields in Narrows, the fort at Nagara reduced by direct fire, battle force proceeds to Marmora preceded by mine-sweepers.

Expenditure on ammunition for (C) would be large, but if supplies sufficient, result should be successful. Difficulty as to (B) greatly increased if *Goeben* assisting defence from Nagara. It would, unless submarine attacks successful, necessitate employment of battle-cruisers from Gaba Tepe or direct.

Time required for operations depends greatly on *moral* of

enemy under bombardment; garrison largely stiffened by the Germans; also on the weather conditions. Gales now frequent. Might do it all in a month about.

Expenditure of ammunition would be large. Approximate estimate of quantity required being prepared.

Disposition of squadron on completion of operations: Marmora, 2 battle-cruisers, 4 battleships, 3 light cruisers, 1 fiotilla leader, 12 torpedo-boat destroyers, 3 submarines, 1 supply and ammunition ship, 4 mine-sweepers collier.

Remainder of force keeping Straits open and covering mine-sweepers completing clearing minefield.

This plan produced a great impression upon every one who saw it. It was to me in its details an entirely novel proposition. My telegram had contemplated something in the nature of an organised 'rush' in accordance with Lord Fisher's suggestion about Admiral Sturdee forcing the Straits with the *Canopus* class of battleships. I sent a copy of the plan at once to the Prime Minister and some others, and it was freely discussed among those who were informed. Both the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Staff seemed favourable to it. No one at any time threw the slightest doubt upon its technical soundness. No one, for instance, of the four or five great naval authorities each with his technical staff who were privy said, 'This is absurd. Ships cannot fight forts,' or criticised its details. On the contrary, they all treated it as an extremely interesting and hopeful proposal; and there grew up in the secret circles of the Admiralty a perfectly clear opinion favourable to the operation. It was then that the War Staff made a suggestion which certainly greatly affected the issue.

The *Queen Elizabeth*, the first in order of the five fast battleships armed with 15-inch guns, was now ready. It had been decided to send her to fire her gunnery trials and calibration exercises in the safe, calm waters of the Mediterranean. She was actually under orders to proceed thither. The Staff now proposed that she should test her enormous guns against the Dardanelles and pointed out that she could fire at ranges far

outside those of the Turkish forts. This had not occurred to me before. But the moment it was mentioned, its importance was apparent. We all felt ourselves in the presence of a new fact. Moreover, the *Queen Elizabeth* came into the argument with a cumulative effect. Vice-Admiral Carden had never dreamed of having her. Our previous discussions and his detailed plan had ignored any help that she might give.

* * * * *

I must at this point interrupt the narrative in order to examine the technical questions which were involved and particularly those relating to the power and accuracy of naval guns.

The established opinion at the Admiralty was that the days when the British Fleet could force the Dardanelles without the aid of an army had ended in the 'seventies and 'eighties. The increased power of artillery, the development of the torpedo and of the submerged mine, added to the simultaneous increase in the cost of ironclad ships, had rendered such an operation injudicious, if not indeed quite impossible. Moreover, the general principle that ships are at the gravest disadvantage in fighting forts, that a '6-gun battery could fight a 100-gun ship,' etc., was also greatly strengthened by the march of technical science.

Most people will say, These are very sensible views: they were believed to be right before the war and they were proved right during the war. To this opinion, both as to theory and experience, I entirely demur. No general or absolute rule can be laid down about fighting between ships and forts. It depends on the ship; it depends on the fort. If, for instance, the ship has a gun which can smash the fort, and the fort has no gun which can reach the ship, it is hard to prove that the ship is at a great disadvantage. In the case of the Dardanelles the two great modifying factors that had appeared were, first, the existence of naval guns which far outranged the guns in the forts, and which were at the same time of immeasurably

increased destructive power; secondly, the existence of a large class of heavily armed and heavily armoured ships which must inevitably pass out of commission in the course of a few months.

Upon this latter point there can be no dispute. The 'old battleship' stood at this period in naval architecture on a far lower plane of value than at any previous time. Until the Dreadnought era the type and value of the British capital ship had altered very little for many years. Two big guns at each end and six medium guns on either side was the uniform system of the armament. Not many ships were built each year. Only minor improvements were effected in their design. Therefore up till 1905 at least the 'old ships' were not unfit to be put in the line with the newest ships. They were older and weaker variants of the same principle. But once the Dreadnoughts began to multiply, all relation between the oldest and the newest was lost. Every year had seen a large new construction. Every year had seen an immense advance. The early Dreadnoughts, with ten big guns instead of four, were superseded by the later ones, and both were far inferior to the super-Dreadnoughts of 1909, and these again had no chance, ship for ship, against the *Queen Elizabeths*. In guns, mechanism, armour, speed, subdivision, this advance was so great at each step that no proportion held between the oldest and the newest ships. We therefore had a class of ships which stood in a different category from any other ships we had had before in the Royal Navy—ships, that is to say, which could not be used in a Fleet action until all their betters had been destroyed, but which were actually, though not relatively, powerful instruments of war. This was a new fact in regard to all bombarding operations.

There was another. All these old ships were doomed to be scrapped in 1915. Their crews were needed to man the great fleets and flotillas of new ships which were now coming into the water and requiring to be commissioned. All the *Majes-*

tics, all the *Canopuses*, all the *Formidables*, all the *Duncans*, were inexorably marked for final extinction within the next year or fifteen months. How could they be used meanwhile? Although they had fallen so far behind the modern battleship, they were at least the contemporaries of the Turkish forts. In 1905 no one would have risked them in trying to force the Dardanelles. They were our latest vessels and all we had. In 1915 they were surplus and moribund. Yet related to the forts their strength was unimpaired.

The gunnery question is more technical, but not less plain. The popular view inculcated in thousands of newspaper articles and recorded in many so-called histories is simple. 'Mr. Churchill having seen the German heavy howitzers smash the Antwerp forts, being ignorant of the distinction between a howitzer and a gun, and overlooking the difference between firing ashore and afloat, thought that the naval guns would similarly smash the Dardanelles forts. Although the highly competent Admiralty experts pointed out these obvious facts, this politician so bewitched them that they were reduced to supine or servile acquiescence in a scheme which they knew was based upon a series of monstrous technical fallacies.' These broad effects are however capable of refinement.

In October, 1916, when the Dardanelles Commission was enquiring into these matters, Sir Arthur Wilson prepared a paper setting forth his views upon the technical issues. Considering the atmosphere which prevailed in the aftermath of a failure, it was characteristic of the old Admiral that he should have advanced to assume a direct share in the burden of responsibility. He was not committed like others by anything he had written at the time—indeed he had another policy—and he could without impropriety have remained silent. He however thought it his duty to explain the views he had held at the time, from which he had since in no way departed. Commenting on the evidence of an adverse witness, who had admitted that 'he had no knowledge of the forts in the Dardanelles,' Sir Arthur Wilson wrote:—

He (the witness) assumed that the personnel are protected by more or less powerful overhead cover of concrete and earth, which is not the case in any of the forts; that the old forts would have the guns in casemates, whereas all the guns were in open embrasures. That there might be disappearing guns or guns in cupolas, which was not the case, etc.; so that the whole argument as to the advantages of high-angle fire is based on false premises.

As a matter of fact, all the larger forts in the Dardanelles in which the heavy guns are mounted have high parapets with open embrasures, which are better targets for high-velocity guns with low trajectory than for howitzers.

Against any kind of horizontal target, such as trenches, or howitzers, or mortars in pits, high-angle fire has the advantage, but against such a target as a high parapet or a definite small object, such as a gun, the high-velocity gun has a great advantage, as it is more accurate, it has a greater striking velocity, and much greater range. For instance, the extreme range of a 12-inch howitzer is about 11,000 yards, and striking velocity 970 f.s.; whereas the striking velocity of the 12-inch Mark X, at the same range would be 1,369 f.s., and the maximum range of this gun, as mounted in the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*, is 16,000 yards.

As the striking force is proportioned to the square of the velocity, the striking force of the 12-inch gun is about double that of the howitzer at this range.

It is quite a debatable question whether high-velocity guns of the same calibre as the howitzers used by the Germans against Liège and Namur, if they could have been brought up and worked, would not have been more effective than the howitzers even then, but it is certain that against the high parapets and exposed guns and personnel of the Dardanelles forts, the high-velocity guns would have the advantage. The shells which passed over the parapet and burst behind it would have little effect in either case, except on stores, etc., in rear, while those from the high-velocity guns, which either struck the parapet or fell in front of it, would have much more effect in actual injury to the parapet and in scattering debris than those from the howitzers. The parapets could not be penetrated, but the scattering of debris might be expected to drive the men from the guns, and there was always the possibility

of exploding the ready magazines which were in the parapets. The gun might also be expected to make more hits than the howitzer.

The parapets of the principal Dardanelles forts must have been about 16 feet high, as the platforms of the guns were 10 feet above the *terre pleine*, so that, allowing for their width, 50 to 90 feet, they would give with an angle of descent of 15 degrees the equivalent of a target 30 to 40 feet high, that is, a rather higher target than that used for our ordinary battle practice.

The conditions for firing against the forts near the water's edge were easier than those in battle practice, as the target was not moving and the land gave the means of accurately fixing the position of the ship in relation to the fort, while the conditions for spotting were very similar. In the case of the forts on higher land the spotting was expected to be much more difficult unless cross observations from two points could be made, or observations made by aircraft, but these forts had nothing heavier than 6-inch guns.

Subject to certain qualifications which will presently appear, these conclusions are, in general, confirmed by the experience and full knowledge of the present day.

The 15-inch naval gun fired from a warship at anchor in calm weather and with perfect observation had, in fact, a greater chance of hitting the targets in question than the contemporary 15-inch howitzer. The actual expectation of hitting one of the Dardanelles 14-inch fortress guns may be calculated from the confidential Tables issued to the Fleet which show the ascertained degrees of accuracy of the various guns at all ranges. These prove, for instance, that the *Queen Elizabeth's* 15-inch guns would for the same number of rounds at 12,000 yards be capable of hitting three and a half times as often as the contemporary 15-inch British howitzer fired on land at 10,800 yards—the full range of the howitzer. This may appear surprising to many people, but it is nevertheless incontestable. The bursting effect of a 15-inch naval shell is not, however, equal to that of a 15-inch howitzer. Owing to

the stronger structure required by the naval shell to resist the higher pressures to which it is subjected, only two-thirds of the explosive charge of the howitzer can be carried. Moreover we had not at that time manufactured a 15-inch common shell to carry a high explosive (lyddite) burster, and the *Queen Elizabeth* had only powder-filled shells of this class during the Dardanelles operations. All this was taken into consideration by the War Staff. Broadly speaking, therefore, the *Queen Elizabeth's* 15-inch guns could at suitable ranges and under proper conditions hit their target at least three times as often as the 15-inch howitzer fired ashore, but the explosive effect of each hit would be less than a third that of the land weapon. So precise are the naval guns and so exact is the naval gunnery, granted the proper observation, that it was not only possible to hit *forts* like those of the Dardanelles from ranges at which they could not reply, but to hit in succession every single *gun* in them. In fact on February 26 the *Queen Elizabeth* scored two hits in 18 rounds, and destroyed the two guns of No. 1 Fort in 31 rounds; and even the old 12-inch guns of the *Irresistible* put the two guns of No. 4 Fort out of action in 35 rounds.

Coming to closer ranges and smaller guns the theoretical results are even more impressive. The various marks of 6-inch guns in the Fleet are (and were) capable, at under 2,000 yards range, of hitting the individual guns in the Dardanelles forts fifty times out of every hundred shots. In some marks of guns the percentage is even higher. For instance, a 6-inch Mark VII gun should hit a 9·4-inch (24 cm.) Turkish gun sixty-two times out of a hundred at 2,000 yards range, and ninety-seven times out of a hundred at 1,000 yards range, provided always that the attacking gun is new, the ship is at anchor, the range has been determined, and the laying is accurate. In so far as these last conditions were not present, the percentage would be reduced. But it would still remain amply sufficient to destroy any gun in the forts for a reasonable expenditure of

ammunition at close quarters. There was no fallacy in the technical arguments of the Admiralty so far as the gunnery was concerned. The difficulties which frustrated the plan lay in the absence of the good conditions of observation at the long ranges, or of the opportunity of coming to close quarters.

* * * * *

As the result of all our discussions, I now called for definite plans and orders to be worked out by the Staff, and I outlined the fleet that was evidently available for the operation.

Secretary, *January* 12.
First Sea Lord.
Chief of Staff.

(1) The forcing of the Dardanelles as proposed, and the arrival of a squadron strong enough to defeat the Turkish Fleet in the Sea of Marmora, would be a victory of first importance, and change to our advantage the whole situation of the war in the East.

(2) It would appear possible to provide the force required by Admiral Carden without weakening the margins necessary in home waters, as follows:—

Ocean, *Swiftsure* and *Triumph* (already in or assigned to this theatre).
Vengeance, *Canopus* (from the Atlantic).
Albion (from the Cape).
Cæsar and *Prince George* (from Gibraltar).
Victorious, *Mars*, *Magnificent*, *Hannibal* (already ordered to be dismantled at home).
Queen Elizabeth (detailed for gunnery preparation at Gibraltar).
Inflexible (ordered to Mediterranean to relieve *Indefatigable*).
Indefatigable (already on the spot).

Thus no capital ship would be ordered from home waters, except four already ordered to be dismantled.

(3) The above takes no account of four French battleships on the spot, and six others reported available. . . .

(4) Operations could begin on February 1, by long-range fire from *Queen Elizabeth* on forts at the entrance. It is not

necessary to develop the full attack until the effect of the first stage of the operation has become apparent. All arrangements should be secretly concerted for carrying the plan through, the seaplanes and ancillary craft being provided. Admiral Carden to command. . . .

Definite plans should be worked out accordingly.

W. S. C.

Lord Fisher approved this minute, and himself at a later date (February 9) added to the proposed fleet the two quasi-Dreadnought battleships, the *Lord Nelson* and the *Agamemnon*. This was a great reinforcement, and involved a diminution to that extent in the margin of the Grand Fleet.

On January 13, I brought the project before the War Council. I circulated Admiral Carden's telegram twenty-four hours beforehand to its principal members, including, of course, the Prime Minister and Lord Kitchener. The record made of this meeting by Sir Maurice Hankey is as follows:—

Mr. Churchill said he had interchanged telegrams with Vice-Admiral Carden, the Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, in regard to the possibilities of a naval attack on the Dardanelles. The sense of Admiral Carden's reply was that it was impossible to rush the Dardanelles, but that, in his opinion, it might be possible to demolish the forts one by one. To this end Admiral Carden had submitted a plan. His proposal was first to concentrate his fire on the entrance forts. When they were demolished he would proceed to deal with the inner forts, attacking them from the Straits and from the seaward side of the Gallipoli Peninsula. This plan was based on the fact that the Dardanelles forts are armed mainly with old guns of only thirty-five calibre. These would be outranged by the guns of the ships, which would effect their object without coming into range. Three modern ships, carrying the heaviest guns, would be required for reducing some of the more modern works, and about twelve old battleships would deal with the remainder. These could now be spared for the task without reducing our strength in the main theatre of war. Among others, he mentioned the *Triumph*, *Swiftsure*, *Goliath*, *Glory* and *Canopus*, all of which had been employed hitherto

for trade protection. Four of the *Majestic* class, which were to have been 'scrapped,' their 12-inch guns being utilised for monitors, could also be made available, though this would entail a delay in the completion of the monitors. Two battle-cruisers were, he said, already in the Mediterranean. The new battle-cruiser *Queen Elizabeth* was already to be sent to Gibraltar for gun trials, and it would be feasible to allow her to conduct her trials against the Dardanelles forts, instead of against a target.

The Admiralty were studying the question, and believed that a plan could be made for systematically reducing all the forts within a few weeks. Once the forts were reduced the minefields would be cleared, and the Fleet would proceed up to Constantinople and destroy the *Goeben*. They would have nothing to fear from field guns or rifles, which would be merely an inconvenience.

* * * * *

Lord Kitchener thought the plan was worth trying. We could leave off the bombardment, if it did not prove effective.

Lord Fisher and Sir Arthur Wilson were both present. Neither made any remark and I certainly thought that they agreed. The decision of the Council was unanimous, and was recorded in the following curious form:—

That the Admiralty should consider promptly the possibility of effective action in the Adriatic at Cattaro or elsewhere—with a view (*inter alia*) of bringing pressure on Italy.

That the Admiralty should also prepare for a naval expedition in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula with Constantinople as its objective.

After the Council I sent the following telegram with Lord Fisher's concurrence to Admiral Carden.

First Lord to Vice-Admiral Carden.

January 15, 1915.

Your scheme was laid by the First Sea Lord and myself before the Cabinet War Council yesterday, and was approved in principle.

We see no difficulty in providing the force you require, including the *Queen Elizabeth*, by February 15.

We entirely agree with your plan of methodical piecemeal reduction of forts as the Germans did at Antwerp.

We propose to entrust this operation to you.

Admiral de Robeck will probably be your second in command.

The sooner we can begin the better.

You will shortly receive the official instructions of the Board.

Continue to perfect your plan.

* * * * *

At this same War Council of January 13 the Admiralty had been repeatedly pressed to consider some naval action in the Adriatic, preferably the bombardment of Cattaro with a view to influencing the attitude of Italy. The momentous importance of exciting the interest and ultimately obtaining the adhesion of Italy was ever in my mind. But I felt that the Dardanelles and Turkey were the real 'motor muscles' of Italian resolve. If in addition to all her anti-Austrian feelings, Turkey, with whom Italy had only just ceased to be at war, and from whom she had newly wrested the Tripoli province, was to be vigorously attacked and possibly overthrown; if the whole Turkish Empire was to be cast on to the board, plunged into the centre of the struggle, with all its rich provinces and immense Italian interests perhaps an easy prey, could Italy afford to remain indifferent? I was sure that the Dardanelles, not Cattaro, was the key to Italian action. I therefore drew up the following minute to the Prime Minister in which Lord Fisher and the Chief of the Staff concurred.

January 14, 1915.

Prime Minister.

We consider that no useful means can be found of effective naval intervention in the Adriatic at the present time. The French have a large superiority of naval force there now, including Dreadnoughts and large numbers of destroyers. Their operations make no progress through the absence of a friendly

army and the presence of hostile submarines. The bombardment of the forts at Cattaro would be a sterile operation attended by great risk from submarines and some damage from gunfire. The entry of the harbour would lead to nothing by itself. Unless, therefore, adequate military force is forthcoming to storm and hold the forts after bombardment, there are no means of producing good results. The same is true of Pola, but in a greater degree. The attempt at a demonstration would probably lead to waste of ammunition and loss of ships, and would produce an effect the exact opposite of what is desired. While the French have ample force for any practicable step in this quarter, we cannot provide any squadron comparable to theirs.

The attack on the Dardanelles will require practically our whole available margin. If that attack opens prosperously it will very soon attract to itself the whole attention of the Eastern theatre, and if it succeeds it will produce results which will undoubtedly influence every Mediterranean Power. In these circumstances we strongly advise that the Adriatic should be left solely to the French, and that we should devote ourselves to action in accordance with the third conclusion of the War Council, viz., the methodical forcing of the Dardanelles.

W. S. C.

I had now become deeply interested in the enterprise, and nothing but new facts and reasons, the merit of which might convince me, would turn me from pressing it forward. In full harmony with the Chief of the Staff, and with the steady and written concurrence of Lord Fisher, I issued the following minutes:—

Secretary.
First Sea Lord. (Intld.) 'F.' 15.1.15 (*received and sent on same date*).

January 13, 1915.

Chief of Staff.

1. In future, the Mediterranean plan discussed to-day will always be referred to as 'Pola.'

2. Sir Percy Scott has been cautioned as to secrecy. He is going out to assist in regulating the Director in *Queen Elizabeth*, but wishes to return from Gibraltar.

3. As Sir H. Jackson is sick, the detailed proposals should be worked out by the Chief of the Staff and orders drafted both as regards the concentration of the ships and the regulation of the gunnery.

4. The orders for concentrating the Fleet required cannot be delayed. It is not necessary to delay the preliminary bombardment of the entrance until all the ships have arrived; but the ships should start for the various Mediterranean ports at once.

5. The question of a base on a Turkish island should be considered. We also want a landing-place for aeroplanes on Tenedos.

6. The Director of the Air Division should be instructed to hold *Ark Royal* with eight seaplanes and aeroplanes in readiness for service 'in Egypt.' We cannot rely on French seaplanes for our spotting. The Army have developed a system of wireless telephone from aeroplanes spotting for artillery, which is most effective. Full details of this should be at once obtained, and some of the machines fitted accordingly. Meanwhile the French should be asked not to fly over the Pola area, as it will only lead to the mounting of Anti-Aircraft guns and complicate spotting later. Admiral Carden should be informed of this.

7. The auxiliary vessels asked for by Carden should be specified and put under orders. He has already *Sapphire* and *Dublin*. *Doris* will make the third Light Cruiser. As the river-boats come home from China, they must stop with the 7 'Beagles' already available. One 'E' [submarine] boat from home, or if suitable, the 'S' boat, and 2 'C's,' should be sent to meet 'A. E.1' [the Australian submarine]. Let a regular scheme of movement and concentration be prepared.

8. Proposals for mine-sweepers should be made, and Malta Dockyard should prepare to fit mine-bumpers.

9. Admiral Carden's proposals should be carefully analysed by an officer of the War Staff in order to show exactly what guns the ships will have to face at each point and stage of the operations, the character of the guns, and their range; but this officer is to assume that the principle is settled, and all that is necessary is to estimate the force required.

10. This enterprise is regarded by the Government as of the highest urgency and importance. A telegram should be

drafted to Admiral Carden approving his proposals and informing him of the forces which will be placed at his disposal. No order should go out to him or anyone else until his answer about ammunition expenditure is received, and until the whole scheme can be considered finally in draft.

Commodore de Bartolomé will keep in touch with the details on my behalf. I hope that definite orders may be issued in two or three days.

In view of the danger of enemy submarines being sent from the Adriatic, speed and secrecy are essential. The minesweepers should take a supply of Bircham indicator nets.[1]

W. S. C.

I also made enquiries into our reserves of ammunition.

Director of Naval Ordnance.

January 15, 1915.

1. Let me have—

(*a*) The number of projectiles of all kinds in hand on the declaration of war;

(*b*) The number delivered since the declaration of war; and

(*c*) The number expended.

Use in all cases . . . simple categories. . . .

2. I should be glad if the War Office could tell me what projectiles they had in hand on the outbreak of war for different marks of guns.

3. We cannot rest content with 15-inch shells being powder-filled only. The Germans are able to fill their 15-inch shells with high explosives, and if the Ordnance Board are not able to solve the problem for us, and solve it promptly and safely, changes will have to be made. Has any attempt been made to use T.N.T. [Tri-nitro-toluene] in shells of the larger guns?[2]

4. (*a*) Is there sufficient propellant now in store for all the projectiles on this list; and (*b*) what amount of propellant will be delivered in the next six months for the new orders?

5. Show, in addition to your total expenditure on each head since the war began, an approximate statement of the expen-

[1] These anti-submarine devices will be described in Chapter XI.

[2] This paragraph shows that we had been discussing at the Admiralty at this time and in connexion with the Dardanelles operations, the reduced bursting power arising from the use of shell filled with powder instead of lyddite; and my discontent therewith.

diture on each service, i.e., the various actions, armoured trains, monitors, etc. I do not want too much detail, but only seven or eight main heads.

6. Let me have a forecast of deliveries in the next two months.

W. S. C.

The replies showed that ample ammunition was available. In fact, when I left the Admiralty at the end of May in spite of all the bombardments on the Belgian coast and at the Dardanelles, we had received four times as much heavy, and twice as much medium shell as we had fired away; and our gigantic reserves were not only intact but largely augmented.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Sir Henry Jackson had completed his detailed examination of the Carden scheme. Having taken four days to study it, he furnished on January 15 a full report upon it. This report, although technical, cannot be omitted. I have never considered that Sir Henry Jackson had what may be called 'accountable responsibility' at this time. He was a high officer serving in an advisory capacity and specially charged with the study of the Turkish theatre. He is not responsible for the decisions which were taken, but he is certainly responsible for the opinions which he expressed in so much detail. These opinions were of first importance coming from an officer of great experience and marked distinction who had recently filled the position of Chief of the War Staff and was subsequently for a year and a half of the War to be First Sea Lord.

MEMORANDUM OF SIR H. JACKSON.

Remarks on Vice-Admiral Carden's Proposals as to Operations in Dardanelles.

January 15, 1915.

Chief of Staff.

Concur generally in his plans. Our previous appreciations of the situation differed only in small details.

(A) and (B) Reduction of defences at the entrance and inside the Straits up to Kephez battery and the destruction of minefields.

The French and British armoured vessels at the Dardanelles, and the *Foudre* with seaplanes, should be able to deal with (A), i.e. defences at the entrance, on similar lines to the previous bombardment which under unfavourable conditions of light seems to have been effective.

Reconnaissance is, however, necessary after every series of attacks, as it may result in the saving of large quantities of ammunition.

In the previous bombardment, four rounds per turret gun were allowed in the British ships, i.e. sixty-four total. If these succeeded in putting Fort Sedd-el-Bahr, with its six heavy guns, out of action, the result is satisfactory, and gives us some data to go on; say, ten rounds per gun at extreme range, as an average.

It is noticeable that the guns of the fort succeeded in dropping projectiles alongside our battle-cruisers, up to a range of 12,300 yards.

This may be taken as near their extreme limit of range, and is good for the old pattern of guns mounted.

It would not, therefore, be prudent to close to less than 13,000 yards in future bombardments of forts with similar guns, in the early stages.

It will be essential to close them[1] in the latter stages to ensure every gun being destroyed.

A reconnaissance by seaplane should be made before getting to close range.

For (B) the necessary sweepers, munitions, etc., should be despatched without delay; and the minefields should be cleared, mostly at night, under the cover of the guns of the squadron, before risking a new battleship in these mined waters, i.e., if it be decided to send one out to assist in the reduction of the batteries. She might, with advantage, commence her operations from outside, off Gaba Tepe, destroying the signal station, and bombarding any fort which is situated on the top of the ridge, and visible from the sea. The experience thus gained would show the practicability of continuing this indirect attack on other forts in the Narrows as pro-

[1] I.e., come close to them.

posed in (C); or whether it would be necessary to resort solely to direct attack at 15,000 yards, and above, from ships anchored in Aren-Kioi Bay, until the forts at the Narrows and the batteries on the surrounding heights are silenced.

There will probably be at least 200 guns of 6-inch and above to be silenced, and many of these will be concealed and probably protected from direct gun fire.

If it requires ten rounds per gun on board to put each gun on shore out of action, 2,000 rounds will, at least, be required, and this must be from heavy guns with long range. In addition to this the final destruction of the forts and field artillery in entrenchments at short range will require a considerable quantity of ammunition for the smaller as well as the larger guns.

I do not think the operation should be attempted unless we are prepared to expend 3,000 rounds of ammunition for the primary armament, and a similar number of rounds for the secondary armament, besides the loss of some vessels.

Seaplanes with incendiary and other bombs should be in readiness to assist by every means in their power in the work of destruction and reconnaissance.

I would suggest (A) [i.e., the attack on the Outer Forts] might be approved at once, as the experience gained would be useful. It should be carried out under favourable conditions of light, and with spotting ships, and continued till all guns at the entrance are permanently silenced.

H. B. JACKSON, *Admiral.*[1]

* * * * *

[1] The Dardanelles Commissioners make the following comments upon this document and upon Sir Henry Jackson's attitude at this time and afterwards, to which I do not desire to add anything:—

'Sir Henry Jackson insisted strongly in the evidence which he gave before us that, in writing his Memorandum of January 15, he agreed to an attack on the Outer Forts and nothing more. He did not consider that an attempt made by the Fleet alone to get through the Dardanelles was "a feasible operation." He thought that "it would be a mad thing to do." He denied the accuracy of the statement made by Mr. Churchill that he, Sir Henry Oliver, and Vice-Admiral Carden "were all agreed." He thought that Mr. Churchill was "very much more sanguine" than they were. But nothing of this sort was put on record at the time. The concurrence expressed by Sir Henry Jackson

I now proceeded to open the matter to the French Government with whom among other things the question of the command in the Mediterranean required readjustment.

Arrangements with the French.

1. The British Government find it necessary to take offensive action against Turkey in the near future. The Admiralty have in consequence decided to attack the Dardanelles forts, and force, if possible, a passage into the Sea of Marmora. It is proposed to achieve this by a gradual and methodical reduction of the forts by naval bombardment, taking three or four weeks if necessary, and using a number of the older battleships, supported by 2 battle-cruisers and the very long-range fire of the 15-inch guns of the *Queen Elizabeth*. In all, 15 battleships or battle-cruisers, 3 light cruisers, 16 destroyers, 6 submarines, 1 seaplane ship, and a large number of minesweepers and auxiliaries are required, having regard to the expected casualties and the need of fighting the Turco-German Fleet immediately on entering the Sea of Marmora. This fleet will be assembled between February 7 and 15, and it is hoped that the attack will follow immediately. The scheme of these operations has been prepared by Vice-Admiral Carden, now commanding the Allied fleets at the Dardanelles.

The Admiralty do not wish, in view of this very important operation, that any change in the local command in that portion of the Mediterranean should be made at the present time. They hope, however, that the squadron of French

in his Memorandum of January 15 with the whole of Vice-Admiral Carden's plans is unqualified save by the expression of an opinion that only the first item of the programme, viz., that which involved the destruction of the outer forts, should be approved at once, with a view to gaining experience. The explanation of Sir Henry Jackson's reticent attitude is probably to be found in the answer which he gave to a question addressed to him by Mr. Fisher to the effect that it was not part of his duty to "unduly interfere with the naval policy except if he were invited to do so by some superior." He also said in the course of his evidence: "It was not for me to decide. I had no responsibilities whatever as to the decision. I had no responsibilities except just for the staff work which I did." He was consulted before the initial telegram of January 3 was sent to Vice-Admiral Carden and expressed his concurrence with its contents.'

battleships, together with the French submarines and destroyers and the seaplane ship *Foudre*, will co-operate under a French rear-admiral.

As the degree of the opposition to be met with cannot be anticipated, it is most undesirable to announce the full scope of the operations beforehand, and secrecy is, of course, vital.

2. The War Office also consider it necessary during the month of February to occupy Alexandretta and the surrounding district in order to cut the Turkish railway communicating at this most important strategic point. If this operation should take place it would be convenient that the disembarkation at Alexandretta and the maintenance of the British force on shore should be covered by British ships, and some of the older vessels now in Egyptian waters would probably be used for this purpose. . . .[1]

Before handing this note to the French naval attaché I took care to have the draft formally countersigned by the Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener, and Sir Edward Grey, as well as by the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Staff. This precaution was appropriate to a matter of grave importance, about which it was essential there should be no subsequent misunderstanding.

I made a similar communication to the Grand Duke Nicholas.

The First Lord of the Admiralty to H.I.H. The Grand Duke Nicholas.

January 19, 1915.

The Admiralty have considered with deep attention the request conveyed through Lord Kitchener from Your Imperial Highness for naval action against Turkey to relieve pressure in the Caucasus. They have decided that the general interests of the Allied cause require a great effort to be made to break down Turkish opposition in addition to the minor demonstration of which Lord Kitchener has telegraphed to you. It has therefore been determined to attempt to force the passage of the Dardanelles by naval force. . . . [The method and the available forces were then again described.]

[1] The rest of the note deals with subsidiary matters.

. . . The Admiralty hope that the Russian Government will co-operate powerfully in this operation at the proper moment by naval action at the mouth of the Bosphorus, and by having troops ready to seize any advantage that may be gained for the allied cause. It would probably be better to defer Russian action until the outer forts of the Dardanelles have been destroyed, so that if failure should occur at the outset, it will not have the appearance of a serious reverse. But it is our intention to press the matter to a conclusion, and at the right moment the intervention of the Russian Fleet will be most desirable.

Finally as the result of continued discussion and continued united agreement, I issued the following minute, in which Lord Fisher concurred:—

Secretary. *January* 20, 1915.
First Sea Lord.
Chief of the Staff.

The attack on the Dardanelles should be begun as soon as the *Queen Elizabeth* can get there. Every effort will be made to accelerate her departure, so that fire can be opened on February 15. It is not desirable to concentrate the whole fleet of battleships required for the operation at the Dardanelles at the outset. This would only accentuate failure, if the forts prove too strong for us. *Indefatigable*, *Queen Elizabeth*, and three or four other British battleships, with the mine-sweepers and the *Ark Royal*, will be sufficient at the outset, having regard to the French ships available. The rest of the fleet should be distributed between Malta, Alexandria and Alexandretta, from which points they can be readily concentrated as soon as progress begins to be made.

As soon as the attack on the Dardanelles has begun, the seizure of Alexandretta should take place. Thus if we cannot make headway in the Dardanelles, we can pretend that it is only a demonstration, the object of which was to cover the seizure of Alexandretta. This aspect is important from an Oriental point of view.

All preparations for the attack on the Dardanelles are to proceed in general accordance with my minutes of January 12 and 13. The Chief of the Staff has already given the

necessary orders, and the ships are moving. Sir H. Jackson will study, and advise the Board upon, this operation, raising all points of detail which require attention. He will also watch and study the naval part in the seizure of Alexandretta, and will confer with the War Office as may be necessary.

As soon as *Indefatigable* is relieved by *Inflexible*, Vice-Admiral Carden may proceed as he proposes to Malta, refit *Indefatigable*, and make all necessary preparations of special appliances for protection against mines, mine-sweeping, etc., returning to the Dardanelles about the 12th, when *Inflexible* will immediately rejoin the Grand Fleet.

Rear-Admiral de Robeck will hoist his flag in one of the battleships detailed for the Dardanelles as soon as possible, and will proceed to Malta to concert the operation with Vice-Admiral Carden.

W. S. C.

The First Sea Lord concurs.

At the same time, while giving decided orders and allowing no doubt or uncertainty to appear in the Admiralty attitude, I was careful to preserve the means of breaking off the operation, if it began to miscarry.

First Lord to Lord Kitchener.

January 20, 1915.

Until the bombardment of the Dardanelles forts has actually begun, we cannot tell how things will go. We must guard against the appearance of a serious rebuff; and we shall therefore at the outset, only use the battleships needed for the initial stage, keeping the rest of the fleet spread between Malta, Alexandria, and Alexandretta, whence they can concentrate very quickly. It is also very desirable that the Alexandretta operation should be so timed as to be practically simultaneous with the attack on the Dardanelles, so that if we are checked at the Dardanelles we can represent that operation as a mere demonstration to cover the seizure of Alexandretta. I believe this aspect is important from an Oriental point of view.

Could you therefore arrange this and let me have your Alex-

andretta dates? We are aiming at February 15 for opening fire on the Dardanelles.

P.S. I am sending a copy of this to the Prime Minister to keep him informed.

It will be seen that the genesis of this plan and its elaboration were purely naval and professional in their character. It was Admiral Carden and his staff gunnery officers who proposed the gradual method of piecemeal reduction by long-range bombardment. It was Sir Henry Jackson and the Admiralty staff who embraced this idea and studied and approved its detail. Right or wrong, it was a Service plan. Similarly the Admiralty orders[1] were prepared exclusively by the Chief of the Staff and his assistants. I outlined the resources at our disposal in the old battleships. But it was the staff who proposed the addition of the *Queen Elizabeth*, with all the possibilities that that ship opened out. It was the First Sea Lord who added the other two most powerful vessels, the *Lord Nelson* and the *Agamemnon* to the Dardanelles Fleet. At no point did lay or civilian interference mingle with or mar the integrity of a professional conception.

I write this not in the slightest degree to minimise or shift my own responsibility. But this was not where it lay. I did not and I could not make the plan. But when it had been made by the naval authorities, and fashioned and endorsed by high technical authorities and approved by the First Sea Lord, I seized upon it and set it on the path of action; and thereafter espoused it with all my resources. When others weakened or changed their opinion without adducing new reasons, I held them strongly to their previous decisions; and so in view of the general interest of the Allies, thrust the business steadily forward into actual experiment.

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[1] See Appendix I—page 547.

Thus is completed the account of the first phase in the initiation of the enterprise against the Dardanelles. There can be very little dispute about the facts in the face of the documents. For twenty days the project has been under discussion among the leading naval authorities of the day, and among the members of the War Council. At the Admiralty it has been the question most debated in our secret circle. So far all opinions are favourable. So far no voice has been raised and no argument advanced against it. The writer of the Australian official history has thought it right to epitomise the story in the following concluding sentence:—

'So through a Churchill's excess of imagination, a layman's ignorance of artillery, and the fatal power of a young enthusiasm to convince older and slower brains, the tragedy of Gallipoli was born.'

It is my hope that the Australian people, towards whom I have always felt a solemn responsibility, will not rest content with so crude, so inaccurate, so incomplete and so prejudiced a judgment, but will study the facts for themselves.

CHAPTER VI

THE ACTION OF THE DOGGER BANK

Naval Uneasiness—Proposal to Withdraw the Battle-Cruisers from the Forth—Minutes—The Prime Minister's Request—Proposed Visit of Sir John Jellicoe to London—The Prime Minister Agrees—German Deliberations—Sir Arthur Wilson's News—Fixing the British Rendezvous—Lord Fisher Concurs—Suspense—Daybreak at the Admiralty—Progress of the Action—Daybreak at the Dogger Bank—Contact with the Enemy—The Great Sea Race—The *Lion* Opens Fire—German Concentration Against the *Lion*—The *Lion* Crippled—Rear-Admiral Moore in Command—The Sinking of the *Blücher*—Severe Tests—Disappointment in Victory—My Letter to the Prime Minister of January 24—Proposal to Base the Grand Fleet on the Forth—My Letter to Sir John Jellicoe of January 26—Effects of the Victory at Home and Abroad.

DURING the middle of January uneasiness about our naval situation manifested itself in the high and secret circles of the Government. Sir John Jellicoe has described in his book what he considered the exceptional weakness of the Grand Fleet at this juncture. His letters to the First Sea Lord were filled with disquieting computations of the relative strength of the British and German navies in the event of a great battle. Several of his Dreadnoughts were undergoing their normal refits, and two more, the *Monarch* and the *Conqueror*, were temporarily disabled by a collision. He returned to the theory which he had developed in the preceding November, that the Germans had secretly armed their latest battleships with much heavier guns. But whereas in November the suggestion had been that four ships were now armed with 14-inch guns, it had by this time grown to six ships and 15-inch guns. There was of course no possibility of such a transformation having taken place. Our intelligence had

secured us identifications of these vessels out of dock and in movement at various dates which made it unbelievable that such enormous reconstructions could have been accomplished. I was, however, forced to combat these arguments and others equally alarming in character, and in particular to set up a Committee under the Third Sea Lord to allay the apprehension that this great re-armament had taken place.[1]

Another request of the Commander-in-Chief caused me much embarrassment. He showed himself extremely anxious that the battle-cruisers which had been stationed at the Forth should be withdrawn to Cromarty in order to be in closer relation with the main Fleet. This proposal, if acceded to, would have deprived us of the means of acting with any effect against a German raid upon our coasts, should the enemy repeat the experiment which he had tried on December 16 against Hartlepool and Scarborough. Cromarty was as far from Heligoland as Scapa, and the withdrawal of Admiral Beatty and the battle-cruisers to this remote station seemed to involve us in unnecessary helplessness. I would have preferred indeed that the whole Battle Fleet should come south to the Forth. But if this could not yet be achieved, I strongly objected to the battle-cruisers being withdrawn from strategic relation with the enemy's fast vessels. I therefore minuted to the First Sea Lord on January 20:

The battle-cruisers ought to be kept together, as then we shall always have a force strong enough to beat the whole of the German fast vessels. They will be quite out of reach for any action to protect the coasts of England if they go to Cromarty, which is the same distance from Heligoland as Scapa. I therefore think they should not be divided or moved from the Forth, unless Admiral Beatty reports that he finds the navigational conditions dangerous. The outer line defences of the Forth are now nearly completed. There is a considerable force of trawlers, torpedo boats and submarines there under the direction of Admiral Lowry, who has shown

[1] See Appendix III.

himself to be a most energetic and capable officer. I see no reason why they should be mined in there more than at Cromarty, and in any case they ought never to proceed to sea without the channels being properly swept beforehand. There is good seaplane protection at the Forth, which can be reinforced if necessary.

W. S. C.

I discussed this question and other matters connected with the strength of the Grand Fleet with Lord Fisher fully the next morning, and he agreed to the view which I took. I therefore minuted to the Chief of the Staff, on the afternoon of the 21st:

The battle-cruisers should be kept together at the Forth as at present, unless Admiral Beatty reports that he finds the navigational conditions dangerous. . . . Action accordingly.

W. S. C.

The repercussion of these misgivings manifested itself in the War Council; and on January 21 the Prime Minister wrote informing me that he was summoning a meeting of the War Council for the 28th and that he desired that Sir John Jellicoe should be invited to be present. I became conscious that adverse currents were once more flowing around the Admiralty. I did not think that it was right to bring Sir John Jellicoe away from his fleet to London in order to attend a War Council during a period admittedly one of stringency in our own strength, and during which from every indication enemy activity might well be expected. I therefore decided to resist to the best of my ability the summoning of Sir John Jellicoe to London; and having obtained Lord Fisher's agreement, I wrote on January 22 the following letter:—

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Asquith.

January 22, 1915.

There is no similarity between the position and functions of a naval Commander-in-Chief and of a modern General in the

field. Military operations take a long time to develop and to carry through. The situation changes by gradations. The directions from the commanding General are given by telegraph or telephone. The larger the army the less direct is his contact with it, and the longer are the phases of every operation. With the Fleet, on the other hand, it is nothing or everything. The Grand Fleet has always been kept at four hours' notice to proceed to sea. Sir John Jellicoe, in the letter which I read to you, expresses the opinion that he ought not to be more than two hours away from his flagship, even during the short period of rest we have pressed him to take. At any moment news may arrive which will require the whole fleet to proceed to sea immediately.

The leadership of a fleet is personal in a sense and degree quite different from that of a large modern army. It all moves in one body in a strict drill formation; and the Admiral gives with his own lips the actual executive words which regulate its attack upon the enemy.

When Lord Fisher became First Sea Lord the matters to be discussed were so serious that we took the extraordinary step of inviting Sir John Jellicoe to come south to consult with us. This was before the Germans had attempted any raid upon our coast, and after a long period of complete passivity on their part. Before he could return to his flagship, the enemy made their abortive attack on Yarmouth. The whole fleet was sent to sea without the flagship; and if the enemy had intended a decisive operation, either the opportunity of bringing him to action would have been missed, or the decisive battle of the war would have been fought without the Commander-in-Chief. In consequence of this experience, we arranged that if any further consultation was necessary, we should go up to him and not bring him down to us. There have already been two alarms in the last month. The 27th is the Emperor's birthday, and it is quite possible that something may be attempted then.

In these circumstances, I do not feel justified in telegraphing to Sir John Jellicoe saying, 'If you think you can get away, do so.' He knows perfectly well that he ought not to leave, and we know well that we ought not to direct him to leave, unless there is a graver military need for his presence here than there is for his presence with the fleet.

I should be, of course, quite ready to arrange for you or Mr. Balfour or Lord Kitchener to visit Sir John Jellicoe and discuss with him any and every aspect of the naval war. We believe that complete unity of thought on the main strategy exists between him and the Admiralty. The most intimate relations of personal friendship prevail between Sir John Jellicoe and the First Sea Lord; they write to each other every day, and sometimes several times a day. I know of no reason, either personal or of policy, which requires external intervention; but if such intervention were necessary, it would be much more in accordance with the public interest and safety that members of the War Council should visit Sir John Jellicoe than that he should be brought down here.

The First Sea Lord desires me to say that these views have his full agreement.

I must point out also that the Admiralty is not merely an administrative Department, but is actually carrying on the war, and that orders are being issued constantly from this Office to ships and squadrons in immediate contact with the enemy. At this present time three separate operations, two of a very serious nature, are being prepared by us and are imminent. I hope, therefore, that we may continue to be sustained by your full confidence, which has helped us to achieve satisfactory results in the first six months of the war.

I sent this letter over to Mr. Asquith on the same morning by my Naval Secretary, Commodore de Bartolomé. This officer, who knew all the facts and was capable of explaining them with the utmost lucidity and tact, succeeded in reassuring the Prime Minister, and returned an hour later to the Admiralty with this satisfactory news.

* * * * *

We have seen the nature of the discussions which proceeded between the German naval staff and the Emperor at the beginning of the year, and the rigorous restrictions which had been imposed upon the German Fleet.[1] In consequence of these Imperial decisions, Admiral von Ingenohl arranged to

[1] See page 60.

send his most powerful battle squadron, the Third, consisting of the *Kaisers* and the *Königs*, into the Baltic for training. He intended, however, that there should first be another enterprise of a limited character by the Fleet in the North Sea. Owing to bad weather this enterprise was postponed from day to day. Towards the middle of January he and the German naval staff led themselves to believe that a great British naval offensive was imminent. They had heard about the dummy warships which were being constructed in Belfast, and they connected these with a plan for running block ships into the river mouths of the Heligoland Bight. They passed some days in a fever heat of excitement and at a high pitch of readiness. On the morning of the 19th a German seaplane sixty miles out from Heligoland sighted 'numerous English ships bound upon an easterly course, among them several battle-cruisers and close upon a hundred small craft.' This then they thought was the great blocking operation. It was, in fact, a reconnaissance in force by the Harwich destroyer and submarine flotillas supported by the battle-cruisers. When nothing happened and later reports showed the Germans that a large part of the British Fleet had approached their coast and had then retired, von Ingenohl concluded that the blocking operation had been abandoned or at any rate postponed. He proceeded forthwith on the 20th to relax his special precautions, and on the 21st sent the Third Squadron through the Kiel Canal for their exercises in the Baltic. The contradictory and inconsequent decisions which followed are sourly described in the German Official History.[1]

After this general relaxation of the state of readiness it would have been quite natural if, in accordance with the guiding lines laid down in the Commander-in-Chief's report and in his war diary, he had now shown still less initiative than before as regards offensive operations in the North Sea. But the weather improved just at this time, and Vice-Admiral

[1] Chapter VI.

Eckerman, the Chief of Staff, wanted to take the opportunity of making up for inactivity during the bad weather. Accordingly on January 22 he submitted the following suggestions to the Commander-in-Chief in writing:—

'If the weather to-morrow remains as it has been this afternoon and evening, a cruiser and destroyer advance to the Dogger Bank would in my opinion be very advisable. No special preparations are needed; an order issued to-morrow morning to the Senior Officer, Scouting Forces, would be sufficient.

'Proceed out at night, arrive in the forenoon, return in the evening.'

Admiral von Ingenohl, says the German historian, at once realised that this proposal was in contradiction to the guiding lines just laid down, and he made the following marginal note:—

'I should prefer it if such advances were made only when the Fleet can proceed in company. Unfortunately this is impossible at the moment.'

Nevertheless he gave his consent. . . .

At 10.25 the next morning the following order was sent to Read-Admiral von Hipper by Wireless Telegraphy:—

'First and Second Scouting Groups, Senior Officer of Destroyers and two flotillas to be selected by the Senior Officer Scouting Forces are to reconnoitre the Dogger Bank. They are to leave harbour this evening after dark and to return to-morrow evening after dark.'

* * * * *

On the 23d Lord Fisher, who in spite of several divergences of view which will be dealt with later, had been very staunch and good to me over the Jellicoe incident, was laid up with a cold. I therefore visited him at Archway House, which adjoins the Admiralty buildings. We had a long and pleasant talk over our various problems. It was nearly noon when I regained my room in the Admiralty. I had hardly sat down when the door opened quickly and in marched Sir Arthur Wilson unannounced. He looked at me intently, and there was a glow in his eye. Behind him came Oliver with charts and compasses.

'First Lord, these fellows are coming out again.'

'When?'

'To-night. We have just got time to get Beatty there.'

We sent successively at brief intervals the following telegrams:—

Admiralty to Commodore (T),[1] *Harwich.* Negative plan Z. All your destroyers and light cruisers will be wanted to-night. Negative sending destroyers to Sheerness for escort.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral Lion, Rosyth. Get ready to sail at once with all battle-cruisers and light cruisers and sea-going destroyers. Further orders follow.

Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief Grand Fleet. First, Second and Fourth Battle Squadrons, cruisers and light cruisers should be ready to sail after dark this evening.

This done, Sir Arthur explained briefly the conclusions which he had formed from the intercepted German message which our cryptographers had translated, and from other intelligence of which he was a master. All the German fast vessels were putting to sea at dark, and a raid upon the British coast was clearly to be expected. My companions then addressed themselves to fixing the rendezvous for the various British forces. The chart and the compass circles showed in a moment that only Beatty from the Forth and Tyrwhitt from Harwich could intercept the Germans before they could strike and escape. The Grand Fleet could not reach the scene till the next afternoon, nor could any ships stationed at Cromarty. There was, however, just time for Beatty and Tyrwhitt to join forces at daylight near the Dogger Bank. Wilson and Oliver had already drawn on the chart, with what afterwards proved to be almost exact accuracy, the probable line of the

[1] The officer commanding the Flotillas, Commodore Tyrwhitt, was styled in naval parlance Commodore of Torpedoes, or for short, "Commodore (T)." Similarly the Captain of Submarines was called "Captain (S)."

enemy's course. They stepped it out with the compasses hour by hour, at what they guessed would be the German speed, till it reached our coasts. They then drew from the Forth and Harwich the intercepting lines of Beatty and of Tyrwhitt. The intention was that the British forces should meet and be united at daybreak at some point about ten miles, or half an hour behind the enemy after he had passed westward, and consequently be *between* him and *his* home. We discussed whether we could run the risk of a more adventurous scoop, i.e., a rendezvous for our ships still further to the eastward. This would give more certainty of being between the enemy and his home, but also more chance of missing him if the weather became thick; and remembering what had happened on December 16, this last possibility seemed a very serious one. Thus the rendezvous was fixed for 7 the next morning the 24th, in 55° 13′ North, 3° 12′ East, i.e., 180 miles from Heligoland and almost in a line from Heligoland to the Firth of Forth.[1] The following telegram was sent to the Commander-in-Chief with the Grand Fleet at Scapa, to Admiral Bradford with the Third Battle Squadron, to Admiral Beatty with the battle-cruisers at Rosyth, and to Commodore Tyrwhitt with the light cruisers and destroyers at Harwich:[2]

Four German battle-cruisers, six light cruisers and twenty-two destroyers will sail this evening to scout on Dogger Bank, probably returning to-morrow evening. All available battle-cruisers, light cruisers, and destroyers from Rosyth should proceed to a rendezvous in 55° 13′ N., 3° 12′ E., arriving at 7.0 a.m. to-morrow. Commodore (T) is to proceed with all available destroyers and light cruisers from Harwich to join Vice-Admiral *Lion* at 7.0 a.m. at above rendezvous. If enemy is sighted by Commodore (T) while crossing their line

[1] The attention of the reader is directed to the map and plan facing p. 142.

[2] This telegram has already been published in Mr. Filson Young's account of this action, 'With the Battle Cruisers,' p. 174.

of advance, they should be attacked. W[ireless] T[elegraphy] is not to be used unless absolutely necessary. Telegram has been sent to Commander-in-Chief Home Fleet; Vice-Admiral *Lion;* Vice-Admiral Third Battle Squadron; and Commodore (T).

Nearly an hour had passed in these calculations and discussions, and meanwhile the First Sea Lord was still unaware of what was taking place. I therefore asked Sir Arthur Wilson and the Chief of the Staff to take the charts and the draft telegram over to Archway House, and unless there was any difference of opinion, to despatch it forthwith. Lord Fisher was quite content with the decisions which were proposed, and action was taken accordingly.

The reader may imagine the tense feelings with which the long hours of the afternoon and evening were loaded. We shared our secret with none. That night I attended a dinner which the French Ambassador was giving to Monsieur Millerand, then Minister of War and in London on a mission of consequence. One felt separated from the distinguished company who gathered there, by a film of isolated knowledge and overwhelming inward preoccupation. In December we had hardly credited our sources of information. All was uncertain. It had even seemed probable that nothing would occur. Now with that experience wrought into one's being, only one thought could reign—battle at dawn! Battle for the first time in history between mighty super-Dreadnought ships! And there was added a thrilling sense of a Beast of Prey moving stealthily forward hour by hour towards the Trap.

* * * * *

We were afoot the next morning while it was still dark, and Fisher, Wilson, Oliver and I were all in the War Room when daylight began to grow out of doors. The ordinary night staff of the various departments were still at their posts. Suddenly, with the sureness of destiny and the punctuality of

a parade, a telegram intercepted from the Fleet was laid before us. It was from the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron to the *Lion* (Beatty) and the *Iron Duke* (Jellicoe):

(*Sent* 7.30 a.m. *Received* 8.1 a.m.)

Urgent. Enemy in sight. Lat. 54°. 54″. N.: Long. 3°. 30′. E. Steering East. Consisting of battle-cruisers and cruisers, number unknown.

And two minutes later:—

Urgent. Lat. 55°. 24′. N., Long. 4°. 15′. E. Enemy in sight consisting of cruisers and destroyers, battle-cruisers, light cruisers, steering between South-east and South.

So once again it had all come true!

There can be few purely mental experiences more charged with cold excitement than to follow, almost from minute to minute, the phases of a great naval action from the silent rooms of the Admiralty. Out in blue water in the fighting ships amid the stunning detonations of the cannonade, fractions of the event unfold themselves to the corporeal eye. There is the sense of action at its highest; there is the wrath of battle; there is the intense, self-effacing, physical or mental toil. But in Whitehall only the clock ticks, and quiet men enter with quick steps laying slips of pencilled paper before other men equally silent who draw lines and scribble calculations, and point with the finger or make brief subdued comments. Telegram succeeds telegram at a few minutes' interval as they are picked up and decoded, often in the wrong sequence, frequently of dubious import; and out of these a picture always flickering and changing rises in the mind, and imagination strikes out around it at every stage flashes of hope or fear.

1st Light Cruiser Squadron to Commander-in-Chief.

(*Sent* 8 a.m. *Received* 8.20 a.m.)

Enemy's ships have altered course to N.E.

Lion to Commander-in-Chief.

(*Sent* 8.30 a.m. *Received* 8.37 a.m.)

Enemy sighted consisting four battle-cruisers, four light cruisers, destroyers number unknown, bearing S. 61 E. 11 miles. My position Lat. 54°. 50′. N., Long. 3°. 37′. E. Course S. 40 E. 26 knots.

Commander-in-Chief to 3d Battle Squadron.

(*Sent* 9 a.m. *Received* 9.18 a.m.)

Steer towards Heligoland.

Commodore Tyrwhitt to Commander-in-Chief.

(*Sent* 9.5 a.m. *Received* 9.27 a.m.)

1st Flotilla and 3rd Flotilla are astern of battle-cruisers. 2 miles.

Commander-in-Chief to 3d Battle Squadron.

(*Sent* 9.20 a.m. *Received* 9.28 a.m.)

Act to support 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron.

Lion to Commander-in-Chief.

(*Sent* 9.30 a.m. *Received* 9.48 a.m.)

Am engaging enemy battle-cruisers. Range 16,000 yards.

1st Light Cruiser Squadron to Lion.

(*Sent* 10.8 a.m. *Received* 10.18 a.m.)

Enemy detached one rearmost battle-cruiser. Am driven off.

1st Light Cruiser Squadron to Lion.

(*Sent* 10.21 a.m. *Received* 10.27 a.m.)

Am keeping touch with enemy.

1st Light Cruiser Squadron to Commander-in-Chief and Lion.

(*Sent* 10.15 a.m. *Received* 10.59 a.m.)

Enemy's airships E.S.E.

We had not heard the *Lion* speak for nearly an hour and a half, during the whole of which period presumably she and the First Battle Cruiser Squadron were in full battle. Evidently Sir John Jellicoe also felt the weight of this oppressive silence.

Commander-in-Chief to Lion.
(*Sent* 11 a.m. *Received by Admiralty* 11.9 a.m.)
Are you in action?

Another twenty minutes' silence, seeming much longer, ensued. Then at last at 11.37 came in the following message not from the *Lion* or the First Battle Cruiser Squadron, but from the Senior Officer commanding the *Second* Battle Cruiser Squadron to the Commander-in-Chief:—

Heavy engagement with enemy battle-cruisers. Lat. 54°. 19′. N., Long. 5°. 05′. E.

Some one said, 'Moore is reporting; evidently the *Lion* is knocked out.'

Across my mind there rose a purely irrelevant picture. I thought of the Memorial Services I had so often attended in Westminster Abbey: the crowd and uniforms, the coffin with the Union Jack, the searching music, Beatty! That vision at least was not true; but, alas, too true indeed, 'The *Lion* knocked out.'

* * * * *

It is time to escape from the tense atmosphere of the War Room and watch the squadrons on blue water.

When the first light of the clear winter's morning shone on a calm sea, Admiral Beatty with his five battle-cruisers (*Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *New Zealand* and *Indomitable*) and four light cruisers reached the rendezvous. Ten minutes later he sighted Commodore Tyrwhitt in the *Arethusa* with seven of his fastest 'M' class destroyers, constituting the van of the Harwich force, and almost simultaneously there came the flash of the first gun. The *Aurora*, following the Commodore as fast as possible at a few miles' distance, with the *Undaunted* and twenty-eight more destroyers of the First and Third Flotillas, came into contact with Admiral von Hipper who,

with the *Seydlitz*, *Moltke*, *Derfflinger* and *Blücher*, accompanied by four light cruisers and twenty-two German destroyers, was steaming along the very course and almost at the very moment which Wilson and Oliver had forecast. The *Aurora* opened fire upon a German light cruiser, and signalled immediately that she was engaged 'with the High Seas fleet.' Thus all three lines of advance met almost at a single point.

We have seen the causes that led to Admiral von Hipper's excursion. As day broke his ships were spread in line abreast on a considerable front, searching no doubt for British fishing vessels and light patrol forces. What followed is extremely simple. The moment the German Commander discovered himself in the presence of numerous British warships, including the battle-cruisers, his decision was taken. He collected his ships, turned completely round, and ran for home with the utmost possible despatch. Meanwhile Admiral Beatty, working up his speed with equal zeal, had already passed somewhat to the southward of the Germans, and by 8 o'clock was steaming on a parallel course about 14 miles behind them. A tremendous race of all the fastest vessels in the two navies now began. Because of the danger of the retreating enemy dropping mines behind him, all the British vessels avoided his actual wake, Commodore Goodenough and his four light cruisers keeping slightly to the north, Tyrwhitt with his whole force of destroyers and cruisers keeping slightly to the south, and the British battle-cruisers further southward still.

In pursuit on land the battlefield is stationary and the troops move; in a stern-chase at sea the ships alter their relative positions very gradually, while the battlefield rushes past as fast as a horse can gallop. In this posture, therefore, all parties to the event continued for a spell. Meanwhile the speed of the British battle-cruisers developed continually, and it soon became evident that they were gaining on the Germans. By 8.30 26 knots was realised, or one knot more than the designed speeds of the *Indomitable* and the *New Zealand*.

Admiral Beatty signalled 'Well done, *Indomitable*,' and demanded 27, 28 and 29 knots in succession at brief intervals. These immense speeds could only be approached by his three leading ships: the *Lion* in the van, the *Tiger* and the *Princess Royal*. It was his intention to overtake the enemy and bring him to battle in the first instance with his three ships against four.

The distance between the rearmost Germans and the leading British ships was now diminishing steadily. So great was the speed of the Super-Dreadnoughts that the destroyers could barely hold their own with it. As the event had fallen, at the moment of contact Tyrwhitt and his forty vessels were pursuing a course which led between the hostile battle-cruiser squadrons. This was inconvenient, because by advancing and drawing abreast of the battle-cruisers—as did the fast 'M' boats—they would obstruct their view with enormous clouds of smoke. On the other hand, at the pace at which all were going, it was not possible to shift them to the southern flank where they could have pressed ahead at a minimum of 27 knots. To fall back behind the British battle-cruisers and to turn off obliquely would have thrown them out of the hunt for good and all. They were therefore not able to overtake and head off the enemy, and remained somewhat shut in slightly astern of and inside the British battle-cruiser line.

About 9 o'clock the *Lion* opened fire.[1] Up to 1914 the greatest range for battle practice had been 10,000 yards. In the spring of that year I had ordered an experimental firing at 14,000 yards, when to universal astonishment considerable accuracy was immediately attained. But this lesson had not been digested when the war broke out. Now in the first action between Super-Dreadnought ships, the pursuers

[1] I have followed in the main the account given by the official historian, modified by the narrative of Commander Filson Young, an eye-witness in the foretop of the *Lion*, and corrected and supplemented by other first-hand information.

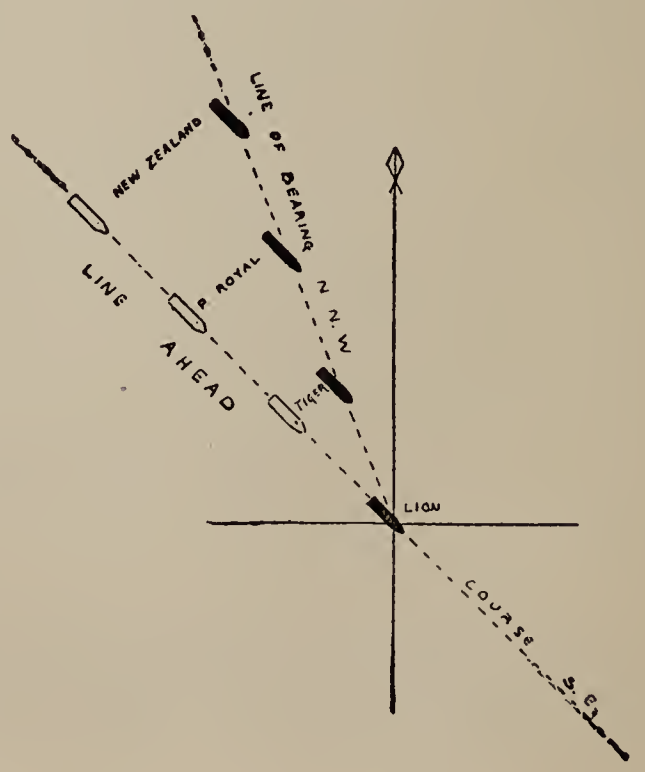
spontaneously opened fire at the hitherto unprecedented range of 20,000 yards. The second shot passed over the *Blücher*, and the *Lion* now began a deliberate fire upon this ship. As the range gradually shortened, the *Tiger* and the *Princess Royal* joined in, and hits upon the *Blücher* were almost immediately observed. At a quarter-past nine the Germans replied. The *Lion* now reached out after the *Derfflinger*, while the *Tiger* and the *Princess Royal* continued firing upon the *Blücher*. The fire became effective on both these German ships. The third salvo hit the *Blücher* on the water-line, reducing her speed; the fourth wrought tremendous damage, disabling two after-turrets and between 200 and 300 men. At 9.35, the *New Zealand* having come into range of the *Blücher*, Admiral Beatty signalled his ships to engage their opposite numbers, ship for ship, he himself firing at the German flagship, *Seydlitz*, which was leading the retreat. The first shell of the *Lion* that hit the *Seydlitz* at over 17,000 yards' range inflicted fearful damage, shattering her stern and wrecking both her rear turrets. 'The entire gun crews of both turrets,' wrote Admiral Scheer, 'perished very quickly; the flames rose above the turrets as high as a house.'

Meanwhile, however, the enemy had also begun to hit. Owing to a misunderstanding of her orders, the *Tiger*, as well as the *Lion*, was firing upon the *Seydlitz* and missing her badly. The *Princess Royal* was rightly engaging the *Derfflinger;* the *New Zealand*, the *Blücher;* and the *Indomitable* was not within range. Thus the *Moltke* was free from all attack and able to fire undisturbed on the *Lion*.[1] All the three leading German ships concentrated their fire upon the *Lion*, and for the next hour and a half this noble vessel, hurled forward at her utmost speed, carried the dauntless flag of the Admiral

[1] The Official Naval History has by mistake interchanged the *Moltke* and the *Derfflinger*. According to the German accounts it is clear that the *Moltke* was the ship running free and that she alone had no antagonist and no casualties.

into the teeth of the storm. The sea rose in mighty fountains all around her, which fell in hundreds of tons upon her deck. The splinters from shells bursting close alongside filled the air with fragments. From half-past nine onward she was repeatedly struck. A little before ten her foremost turret was smashed in and one of its guns disabled. A few minutes later her armour was pierced by an 11-inch shell. At 10.18 two 12-inch shells from the *Derfflinger* struck her—one piercing the armour, bursting behind it and flooding several compartments; the other driving in an armoured plate below the water-line. The Admiral, disdaining the conning tower and standing with his staff upon the open bridge, continued to drive his flagship forward at her extreme speed, which was not yet impaired, zigzagging from time to time to spoil the accuracy of the enemy's fire. The situation was favourable. None of our battle-cruisers had been seriously damaged, and the *Indomitable* was available to deal with any wounded enemy ships. The critical period of the action was now approaching.

At 10.22 Admiral Beatty finding his ships greatly hampered by smoke interference, ordered the battle-cruisers to 'Form on a Line of Bearing N.N.W.,'[1] and to proceed at their utmost speed. His intention was to avoid the smoke and splashes and bring the rear of his squadron into closer action with the enemy, who had formed on a Line of Bearing to Port of the *Seydlitz*. The German flotillas by altering their course to starboard



[1] 'Line of Bearing' is an echelon formation thus:—

i.e., into water where their mines and torpedoes might be encountered. This Parthian menace forced Admiral Beatty to desist from his closing movement, and to resume his parallel course under a tremendous fire. The *Blücher* was now burning and falling out of the German line; and at 10.45 Admiral Beatty ordered his rearmost ship, the *Indomitable*, which was some distance astern but rapidly overhauling the *Blücher*, to 'Attack the enemy breaking away to the Northward,' meaning thereby the *Blücher*. He made further efforts to close, but at 10.52 while in the hottest action with the *Seydlitz*, the *Moltke* and the *Derfflinger*, the *Lion*, which had already received fourteen hits, was suddenly struck in a spot vital to her speed and fatal, as it proved, to our complete victory. Her port engine failed, she listed 10 degrees and her speed sank in a few minutes to 15 knots.

At this moment (10.54), when the *Lion* was falling out of the line, and the *Tiger*, the *Princess Royal* and *New Zealand* were drawing swiftly past her, the wash of a periscope on the starboard bow was reported from the *Lion's* foretop to Admiral Beatty, and seen by both the Admiral and his staff. German submarines were, as we now know, actually in this area at the time. To avoid this new danger by a quick manœuvre, he ordered the whole squadron to turn 8 points to port together, i.e., across the rear of the enemy and at right angles to his own previous course. This movement was intended to be of the briefest duration, and four minutes later the Admiral modified it by the signal 'Course North East.' Matters now, however, passed completely beyond his control. The *Lion* was falling far astern of her consorts. Her wireless had been shot away, her searchlights were smashed, and only two signal halyards were left. Thus at this crisis when the great vessels, friend and foe, were shearing through the water at nearly 30 miles an hour and, once deflected, were altering their relationship in space every second, the *Lion*, carrying in Admiral

Beatty the whole spirit and direction of the battle, was crippled and almost dumb. Her last two signals were 'Attack the rear of the enemy,' and then, as a parting injunction, 'Keep closer to the enemy. Repeat the signal the Admiral is now making.' But the signal flags blowing end on were difficult to read and none of the battle-cruisers took in the final order.

It was at this juncture and in these circumstances that Rear-Admiral Moore, whose flag was flying in the *New Zealand*, now third in the line, succeeded to the command. He was an officer whose distinguished abilities had made him invaluable as Third Sea Lord during the greater part of my tenure at the Admiralty. He had earnestly desired a sea command adequate to his rank and services. His wish had been accorded, and now almost at once Fortune presented herself to him in mocking and dubious guise. He was not certain at first that he had succeeded to the command. It was never formally transferred. He did not know why Admiral Beatty had suddenly turned so sharply to the north. No hostile submarines had been reported to him. The signal 'Attack the rear of the enemy' was hoisted by the *Lion* before the compass signal 'Course North-east' had been hauled down. Both signals were therefore read by all the battle-cruisers as one, and this was interpreted by Rear-Admiral Moore as a direct order to attack the forlorn and isolated *Blücher*, which actually bore north-east from him at that moment. Neither Admiral Moore nor any of the battle-cruisers ever received the signal 'Keep closer to the enemy.' He therefore suffered the *Tiger*, his leading ship, to continue on her course under the same misconstruction of Admiral Beatty's orders which she had independently sustained. He gave no order of any kind until 11.52, nearly an hour after the *Lion* had fallen out of the line.

The whole operation therefore went to pieces. All four of the British battle-cruisers ceased firing on the retreating Germans, and began to circle round the wretched *Blücher* which, already a terrible wreck, was being engaged by the light cruis-

ers and the 'M' destroyers. At ten minutes past twelve the *Blücher*, fighting with desperate courage to the last, rolled over and sank beneath the waves. Of her crew of nearly 1,200 men, 250 were picked up by the British destroyers and light cruisers; and more would have been saved, but for the intervention of a German seaplane which dropped its bombs indiscriminately on the drowning Germans and the British rescuers. Meanwhile Admiral von Hipper, delivered by a single fateful shot from almost certain destruction, continued to make off at his best speed towards Heligoland, then 80 miles away, two out of his three remaining ships burning fiercely, cumbered with wreckage and crowded with dead and wounded. Thus for the second time, when already in the jaws of destruction, the German Battle-Cruiser Squadron escaped.

In the opinion of his professional superiors at the Admiralty Rear-Admiral Moore had warrant for what he did or did not do. He had not departed from a strict interpretation of the actual orders taken in by his ships. These orders, uncorrected by the receipt of the final signal, 'Keep closer to the enemy,' seemed to suggest that some reason unknown to Rear-Admiral Moore had led the most daring of our naval leaders to break off the action. It is not easy to fix the precise moment, while the *Lion* was dropping astern, when the command actually passed to him. The greater his confidence in Admiral Beatty, the slower he would be to assume control and the more impressive the signal to change the course across the enemy's rear would appear. A quarter of an hour might well have been accounted for in this way; and a quarter of an hour was a long time. Ships just holding their own in pursuit or in station on other ships, with only a small margin of speed to spare, lose distance very quickly once the parallel course is departed from. It was certainly open to him, once he was sure that he was in command and that Admiral Beatty was out of it, to resume the parallel course and reopen the action with von Hipper's disappearing vessels. But a long delay must have ensued before

he could have come within range; and his squadron would all the time have been drawing nearer to Heligoland and the German High Seas Fleet.

* * * * *

The tests to which the Admirals in high command are subjected during a naval engagement are far more searching than those of Generals in a battle on land. The Admiral actually leads the Fleet in person and is probably under as severe fire and in as great danger as any man in it; a General, whatever his wishes, has no choice but to remain in his headquarters in complete tranquillity ten, fifteen or even twenty miles away. The General is forced to rely on the reports of others which flow upward to him from Brigades, Divisions and Corps, and transmits his orders through the same channel after consultation with his staff; the Admiral sees with his own eyes, and with his own lips pronounces the orders which move the whole mighty event. The phases of a naval action succeed one another at intervals of two or three minutes; whereas in modern battles two or three hours, and sometimes even days, elapse before fresh decisions are required from an Army Commander. Once the sea battle is joined the whole event is in the hand of the Admiral or his successor as long as he can signal; whereas on land, after zero hour has struck, it escapes for the time being almost entirely from the control of the General.

There are a hundred ways of explaining a defeat on land and of obscuring the consequences of any mistake. Of these the simplest is to continue the attack next day in a different direction or under different conditions. But on the sea no chance returns. The enemy disappears for months and the battle is over. The Admiral's orders uttered from minute to minute are recorded forever in the log-book of every vessel engaged. The great ships, unless their mechanism ceases to function, obey punctually and inexorably the directions they receive

from the human will. The course and speed of every vessel at every moment are recorded. The value of every vessel sunk is known. Their names are published. The charts and compasses are produced, and with almost exact accuracy the position and movement of every ship can be fixed in relation to every other. The battlefield is flat and almost unvarying. Exact explanations can be required at every point, and the whole intense scene can be reconstructed and analysed in the glare of history. This should always be borne in mind in forming judgments.

* * * * *

While these grave matters had so decided themselves, Admiral Beatty, far astern and believing the chase was being continued, had resolved to quit the wounded *Lion* and, hoisting his flag upon the destroyer *Attack*, hastened forward to overtake the battle. Instead, somewhat after noon, he met his ships coming back towards him. In the first bitterness at learning that the rest of the enemy had escaped he ordered the chase to be resumed, although there was now no chance of its succeeding. Twenty or thirty precious minutes had been lost, and with them twenty or thirty thousand yards. This was irretrievable. And realising that further pursuit was useless, he turned back and steered towards the *Lion* to make provision for her safety and return to the Forth.

The condition of the *Lion* seemed for some time critical; her speed fell to 8 knots, her list increased, and serious anxiety arose. Her engines finally became incapable of steaming at all. She was taken in tow by the *Indomitable*, and in this fashion began her long, slow and dangerous return to the Forth. Sixty destroyers under Commodore Tyrwhitt surrounded her in ceaseless evolutions, protecting her from torpedo or submarine attack all through the night of the 24th and through the 25th. 'If submarines are seen,' ordered the Commodore, 'shoot and ram them without regard to your

neighbours.' At daylight on the 26th the *Lion*, amid cheering crowds, was brought safely to anchor at Rosyth.

* * * * *

After the action had been finally broken off I sent a messenger by motor-car with the following letter to the Prime Minister who was at Walmer:—

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Asquith.

January 24, 1915, 3.45 p.m.

This morning Beatty, with 5 battle-cruisers and a superior force of light cruisers and destroyers, met *Derfflinger*, *Seydlitz*, *Moltke*, and *Blücher* with light cruisers and destroyers in the middle of the North Sea. The Germans ran for home immediately, and a fierce pursuit ensued, producing a severe action between the battle-cruisers on both sides.

The *Lion* is damaged, but is returning home at 12 knots. Beatty has shifted his flag to the *Princess Royal*.

The *Blücher* (15,500 tons, 25½ knots), practically a battle-cruiser, though with 12 8·2-inch guns and 880 men,[1] [is] sunk. Two other German battle-cruisers reported seriously injured. Deserting the *Blücher*, the Germans managed to make good their escape into their own torpedo area, where we thought better not to follow.

I have no details so far of the destroyer and light-cruiser fighting, but *Meteor*, one of our destroyers, is reported damaged, and I am hopeful that some business has been done. Our ships are now returning.

This action gives us a good line for judging the results of a general battle. It may be roughly said that we should probably fight 6 to 4 at the worst, whereas to-day was 5 to 4. *Blücher* is a heavy loss to the German cruiser fleet—she was only five years old.

I am very grateful to you for not pressing me about Jellicoe.

Late that night came his answer back:—

Mr. Asquith to Mr. Churchill.

Sunday.

I think this news very good and congratulate you heartily.

* * * * *

[1] She actually had nearly 1,200 men on board.

The result of the engagement confirmed and fortified my own convictions of the great strength of the British line of battle, and in particular of the ships armed with the 13·5-inch guns. But while the strength of the Fleet was proved to be satisfactory, its strategic station was also proved to be too remote. But for the fact that the battle-cruisers had been held at the Forth against the wishes of the Commander-in-Chief, the Germans would have raided the British coasts with impunity. Nothing but Tyrwhitt and his light cruisers and flotillas could have caught them, and these would have been easily repulsed and seriously handled in a daylight action by the forces which the Germans sent to sea.

At the moment of contact with the enemy the Grand Fleet was nearly 150 miles to the northward. It was completely out of relation and could not, unless the fight moved towards it, have come into action that day. The only support which was available for Admiral Beatty was the Third Battle Squadron. Had the German High Sea Fleet been at sea to sustain its fast forces, we should have been powerless to strike, if not indeed in serious danger of being struck. I therefore, as soon as we could appreciate the results of the battle, addressed the following letter to the Commander-in-Chief.

Mr. Churchill to Sir John Jellicoe.

January 26, 1915.

I wish you to consider moving your base from Scapa Flow to the Firth of Forth. The Firth of Forth is specified in your War Orders as your principal fueling base. It is a strongly defended port. It has many facilities which are lacking at Scapa. The inner line of anti-submarine defences has been completed and is thoroughly satisfactory; the outer line is almost completed; and the Oxcars, Inch Mickery, and Inch Colm islets are defended with guns and lights. There is therefore ample room for your whole fleet. In order to get full security, we require a greater concentration of our resources. If you came South and joined all your trawlers and defensive flotillas to those already at the Forth it would be

possible to keep an area at least 40 miles from May Island absolutely swept and secured. Admiral Lowry has shown himself to be a thoroughly competent officer; and with the large numbers of protective and scouting vessels which would then be available, as well as a large supply of seaplanes, your exits and entrances could be made safer than at Scapa. Scapa should, of course, be kept up on a reduced scale, occupied by the 10th Battle Squadron,[1] and watched by a few destroyers and trawlers from Cromarty. Cromarty would remain as at present. We would endeavour to bring the Medway floating dock to Rosyth, and gather a regular repairing staff there. This would help you in refits.

You would then have under your hand three flotillas of the First Fleet, comprising 63 seagoing destroyers; your present 29 and *Oak*, less 8; Admiral Lowry's 7 destroyers and 12 ex-coastals—a total of 103 destroyers. You would have your own 84 trawlers and mine-sweepers, 8 yachts, and 8 motor boats added to Admiral Lowry's 61 trawlers and mine-sweepers, 7 yachts, and 13 motor boats; and we could concentrate at least 30 mine-sweeping trawlers from Charlton's general force, to make a total, if necessary, of over 200 organised small craft to watch, picket, and sweep the approaches. Besides this, there are Lowry's 8 submarines. I could put 20 seaplanes at your disposal. In fact, it seems to me certain that you could be made as safe and comfortable at the Forth as the Germans are in the Elbe, while the sweeping outward for mines and picketing against submarines and minelayers would be far more thoroughly carried out in this limited area than at present. It would also be easy to devise a system of defensive minefields which would keep the enemy at a distance, but through which we could easily pass.

The strategic advantages are too obvious to require enlarging upon. You would have your four battle squadrons united. It has now been decided to strengthen greatly the minefield north of the Straits of Dover so as to close that channel effectively to heavy ships. When this is done, the 5th Battle Squadron (two *Lord Nelsons* and six *Formidables*) will be moved to the Humber, and join the 1st Cruiser Squadron and patrol flotillas there. The Harwich Striking Force, although seriously weakened by the withdrawal of the First Flotilla,

[1] The Dummy Battleships.

GERMAN SQUADRON
BRITISH BATTLE CRUISERS
GRAND FLEET
7. a.m.
NOON
8.30
9
9.15
9.35
10.5
Blucher only
11.50
Lion only
10.58
Tiger leading
10.22
10.48
11.10
10.52
11.45
Blucher sank 12.13
11.10
11.25
10.52
Lion
Tiger leading Squadron
German submarines hereabouts
N O R T H
3rd BATTLE SQUADRON
7. a.m.
9.20 a.m.
BATTLE CRUISERS
2. a.m.
5.30 a.m.
NOON
7. a.m.
7.51
7.55
GERMAN SQUADRON
9.40
10.5
11.0
11.10
Blucher sunk
7. a.m.
TRYWHITT with Harwich force
MINE FIELD
THE ACTION OF
THE DOGGER BANK
January 24th, 1915.
Longitude 5° East from G° Greenwich

will comprise five *Arethusas*, and all the 'L' and the 'M' class destroyers, together with the overseas submarines. With both these forces, you would be in close relation and would be able to give a greater personal direction to the operations than is possible while you remain at such a distance from the scene of action.

All this is of course in the future; but if the change could be made in the next month or six weeks, it seems to me that on every ground great advantages would be secured. Your fleet would be not less safe and more efficient, and the strategic situation, whether for the attack of the enemy or for the defence of this country, would be vastly improved.

I send you a copy of a project[1] which we are considering here for the reorganisation of the battle and light cruisers which will greatly strengthen the force at your disposal. It embodies the principle of scouting groups, any two of which are capable of meeting the whole fast forces of the enemy.

I have never said or thought that you are too lavish with your refits; though I think that sometimes during critical periods it is well to suspend them. Also I hope that for the present the ships will stay as much as possible in harbour so as to reduce wear and tear to a minimum.

The action on Sunday bears out all I have thought of the relative British and German strength. It is clear that at five to four they have no thought but flight, and that a battle fought out on this margin could have only one ending. The immense power of the 13·5-inch gun is clearly decisive on the minds of the enemy, as well as on the progress of the action. I should not feel the slightest anxiety at the idea of your engaging with equality. Still I think it would be bad management on our part if your superiority was not much nearer 6 to 4 than 5 to 4, even under the worst conditions.

One cannot now dispute the advantages of moving the Grand Fleet to the Forth. It would have taken four or five months to prepare the new base and its defences in a satisfactory way. My representations were, however, unsuccessful, and after correspondence which extended over six weeks I found myself compelled to minute on March 3:—

[1] The Battle-Cruiser Fleet.

The Commander-in-Chief's view must prevail, and in consequence I consider that the land defences of Scapa should immediately be begun on an emergency, but semi-permanent, scale.[1] A regular system of guns and lights on shore should be devised. Store houses, jetties and other conveniences should be taken in hand, and provision made for the comfort and recreation of the Fleet. I should be glad if the Third Sea Lord would call a small Committee to report on the subject and propose all the necessary measures. Buildings should be rented and converted as far as possible, and any new structures erected should be of the kind that can be put up most quickly. But it is clear the Fleet will have to stay there for a long time to come and should make themselves comfortable and safe.

W. S. C.

It was not until 1917, after Admiral Beatty had become Commander-in-Chief, that the Grand Fleet was based on the Firth of Forth.

* * * * *

The victory of the Dogger Bank brought for the time being abruptly to an end the adverse movement against my administration of the Admiralty, which had begun to gather. Congratulations flowed in from every side, and we enjoyed once again an adequate measure of prestige. The sinking of the *Blücher* and the flight, after heavy injuries, of the other German ships was accepted as a solid and indisputable result. The German Emperor was confirmed in the gloomy impressions he had sustained after the action of August 28, 1914. All enterprise in the German Admiralty was again effectually quelled, and apart from submarine warfare a period of nearly fifteen months halcyon calm reigned over the North Sea and throughout Home Waters. The neutral world accepted the event as a decisive proof of British supremacy at sea: and even at home the Admiralty felt the benefit in a sensible increase of confidence and goodwill.

[1] Up to this date all the defences were floating.

CHAPTER VII

SECOND THOUGHTS AND FINAL DECISION

The Progress of the Dardanelles Plan—Failure of Other Alternatives—Change in Lord Fisher's View—The Strength of the Grand Fleet—Minutes—Lord Fisher's Memorandum of January 25—The Russian Reply about the Dardanelles—My Memorandum of January 27—Increasing Strength of the Grand Fleet—Its Legitimate Task—Interview with the Prime Minister—The War Council of January 28—General Support for the Dardanelles Plan—Lord Fisher's Behaviour—His Final Consent—Pressure and Reluctance—The Extent of the Admiralty Commitment—The Passive Hypothesis.

UP to about January 20 there seemed to be unanimous agreement in favour of the naval enterprise against the Dardanelles. War Office, Foreign Office, Admiralty seemed by their representatives to be equally in earnest. The War Council had taken its decision. It is true it was not a final or irrevocable decision. It authorised and encouraged the Admiralty to survey their resources and develop their plans. If these plans broke down in preparation, it would be quite easy for us to report the fact to the War Council and go no farther. But the staff work continued to progress smoothly, and all the Admirals concerned appeared in complete accord. It was not until the end of January, when negotiations with the French and Russian Governments were far advanced, when many preparations had been made, when many orders had been given and when many ships were moving with his full authority, that Lord Fisher began to manifest an increasing dislike and opposition to the scheme.

Meanwhile the possibilities of a British naval offensive or of amphibious action in Northern waters were becoming continually more remote. Correspondence with Sir John Jellicoe

showed the Commander-in-Chief averse from anything in the nature of an attack upon Borkum or an attempt to enter the Baltic. To strengthen our naval forces by every conceivable means, to add every new vessel to the Grand Fleet and to remain in an attitude of inactive expectancy was the sum and substance of the naval policy advocated from this quarter. At the same time the opposition of General Joffre to Sir John French's plans for an advance in force along the Belgian coast brought that project also to an end. It was clear that no serious naval offensive would take place in the Northern theatre for an indefinite period, and that any plans which might gradually be perfected for such an offensive would derive no encouragement from the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet.

All this made me only the more anxious to act in the Mediterranean. That seemed to be the direction reserved for our surplus ships and ammunition, by the failure or postponement of other alternatives. It was the only direction in which we had a practical plan, properly worked out by the staff, and supported by a powerful consensus of naval and political opinion.

As soon, however, as the Commander-in-Chief realised that the *Queen Elizabeth*, a battle-cruiser, and other powerful ships were to be assigned to the Mediterranean theatre, he began to dwell again upon the weakness of his fleet and the insufficiency of his margins. And now for the first time he found a ready listener in the First Sea Lord. Lord Fisher's sudden dislike of the Dardanelles project seemed to arise at this time largely and even primarily from his reluctance to undertake the bombardment and blocking in of Zeebrugge. This operation appeared all the more necessary now that the Army had abandoned their intention of the coastal advance. It was strongly urged by the War Council, by the Admiralty Staff and especially by Sir Arthur Wilson. 'If we do not block the Zeebrugge canal,' Sir Arthur had written on January 4, 'I think we

shall inevitably lose more ships and also many transports. If we had done it last time we bombarded, we should not have lost *Formidable*. We cannot keep ships entirely locked up in harbour without deterioration. So far very few of our losses have been incurred while the ships have been employed in any active operations.' I was in cordial agreement with this doctrine. Ultimately, as every one knows, the blocking of Zeebrugge had to be carried out under circumstances of infinitely greater difficulty and after we had suffered grievous injury. The First Sea Lord, finding himself entirely alone on the question, became very much disturbed. His dislike of the Zeebrugge operation was extended not only to the Dardanelles plan, but to all plans of naval attack on hostile coasts which were not combined with large land forces, and ultimately he expressed opinions which seemed opposed to any form of naval intervention in any quarter. This was a great change, at variance both with his earlier and later attitudes, and I was concerned to observe it.

Lord Fisher's arguments did not take the form of criticising the details of either operation in question. He did not, for instance, deal with the gunnery aspects of the Dardanelles, or with any purely technical aspect, in regard to which any valid argument would have had to be met, or the plan abandoned. It was about the safety of the Grand Fleet and its margin of superiority that he now professed to be seriously perturbed. This was a subject with which I was extremely familiar. Had we not been two months before over the whole ground together in the discussions of November with the Commander-in-Chief? There was no real substance in the apprehensions with which I was now confronted. An important fact however lay behind them. Lord Fisher had on reflection, on second thoughts, on some prompting or other, turned against the operation which he had hitherto willingly supported. Nevertheless matters had moved forward to a point where mere vague misgivings could not be allowed to paralyse action. Good reasoning or

new facts were required. It was not as if the Carden plan involved any great hazard or cost. As long as it was adhered to, losses must be limited and the operation could be broken off at any moment. Meanwhile the demonstration would give the Grand Duke the help he so sorely needed, and would influence the situation in the Balkans. It was in this light that I dealt with the Grand Fleet question in the following minutes which arose in the first instance over the need of providing Vice-Admiral Carden with at least one battle-cruiser to counter the *Goeben*.

January 19, 1915.

First Sea Lord.

I have been looking into the question of the Grand Fleet, in view of the attached telegram [from the Commander-in-Chief].[1] Since the war began, Commander-in-Chief has lost *Audacious*, and has gained *Erin*, *Agincourt*, *Emperor of India*, *Benbow*, *Tiger*, and *Indomitable*. He has, therefore, 5 more Dreadnoughts, including four of the most powerful afloat, than he had at the outset.

To-day's Pink List [2] shows that after *Superb* has gone, he has 21 Dreadnought battleships. *Monarch* is ready to rejoin, making 22. He has 5 battle-cruisers available now that *Queen Mary* is refitting, making 27 Dreadnoughts to a maximum German possible 21. On this line of battle his broadside is much more than double that of the enemy. In addition, he has 7 out of the 8 *King Edwards*. His Second Cruiser Squadron is quite unmatched on the enemy's side.

In addition to the above, he has recently been reinforced by *Warrior*, *Black Prince*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Leviathan*, and *Donegal*. He has had his light cruisers increased by *Gloucester*, *Yarmouth*, *Galatea*, and *Caroline;* while since the beginning of the war the enemy have lost *Magdeburg*, *Köln*, *Mainz*, to say nothing of *Yorck* and *Ariadne*. He is about to be reinforced further by *Minotaur*, *Defence*, *Hampshire*, *Cumberland*, and the whole of the First Destroyer Flotilla, with the light cruiser *Fearless*. He has altogether at present under his orders 70

[1] Not printed.

[2] A printed daily return showing the distribution of all British war vessels.

destroyers and 3 destroyer leaders, of which 56 are fit for service and 14 refitting. Altogether he has now available for service 23 cruisers and light cruisers, and 6 refitting. Moreover, the whole of the commerce blockade has been taken off his hands by the addition to his force of 23 armed merchant cruisers and 8 boarding vessels.[1]

In these circumstances his telegram attached . . . ought certainly not to affect our dispositions.

It is of the greatest possible importance that the *Indefatigable* should have her defects attended to at once, and that Admiral Carden should have a few days at Malta to make various preparations for the work entrusted to him. *Inflexible* is the only ship that can promptly relieve him, and I certainly think she ought to do this as arranged.

Australia has been diverted from Gibraltar, and will carry out repairs to her propeller at home. She will therefore be available in home waters.

W. S. C.

January 20, 1915.

First Sea Lord.

You seem to have altered your views, since taking office, about the relative strengths of the British and German Grand and High Sea Fleets. In November you advised the removal of *Princess Royal*, *Inflexible*, and *Invincible*, together with 8 *King Edwards* and 5 *Duncans*, a total of 16 capital ships, from the Grand Fleet, some for temporary duties of importance, but the battleships for permanent service in the south. The dispositions were carried out. Since then the Commander-in-Chief has received back the 8 *King Edwards* and the *Princess Royal;* he has gained the *Indomitable;* he has received the *Warrior*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Black Prince*, *Gloucester*, *Yarmouth*, *Caroline*, *Galatea*, *Donegal* and *Leviathan*, together with 16 destroyers additional, and, I think, about 50 extra trawlers and yachts. These are immense additions to his strength, and I know of no new circumstances which have arisen or of reinforcements which have reached the enemy which ought to make us anxious now if we were not anxious before these great additions reached Sir John Jellicoe.

[1] The so-called 'Tenth Cruiser Squadron' to whose indomitable vigilance and seamanship the efficiency of the Naval part of the Blockade was due.

However, in view of your minute and of the importance of reassuring the Commander-in-Chief so far as possible, it seems to me that the following arrangements might be made:—

1. The 1st Destroyer Flotilla to join the Grand Fleet as soon as *Penelope* and *Inconstant* arrive at Harwich. (We cannot allow our forces there to be reduced till we are powerless even to reconnoitre the enemy.)

2. *Galatea*, *Caroline*, *Cordelia*, and *Phaeton* to form a new Light Cruiser Squadron for the Grand Fleet as soon as possible.

3. The 1st Cruiser Squadron to be retained by the Commander-in-Chief until the new Light Cruiser Squadron has been formed.

4. I cannot understand his complaint about *Hannibal* and *Magnificent*. These vessels have been asked for to prevent barrier-breaking ships approaching the booms, and as defences against destroyer attack. The 6-inch guns of the *Crescent* and *Royal Arthur*, now on their way North, are ample for this purpose, and there can be no need whatever for 12-inch-gun ships in those positions. The Commander-in-Chief's views about the complements should, however, be met, the complements strengthened accordingly, and the two present captains of the *Magnificent* and *Hannibal* transferred to the new vessels.

5. As soon as convenient, the 2 *Lord Nelsons* and the 6 remaining *Formidables*, forming the 5th Battle Squadron, should be transferred from Portland to Rosyth, where they could set the 3rd Battle Squadron free to rejoin the Commander-in-Chief at Scapa or Cromarty. . . .

6. [Already printed in preceding chapter.]

7. The refit of *Invincible* should be accelerated to the utmost. The necessary additional fitters asked for should be sent from home to Gibraltar. The *Inflexible* can sail for home on February 12. *Australia* can stand by to reinforce the Grand Fleet in case of a casualty until either *Invincible* or *Inflexible* has got home.

I hope you will consider that these measures meet the case put forward in your minute.

W. S. C.

January 20, 1915.

Lord Fisher accepted these arrangements but returned to the charge on the question of destroyers, admittedly our weakest point.

January 20, 1915.

First Lord.

* * * * *

As you rightly say, it is of the highest importance to reassure the Commander-in-Chief. I would like on his behalf [in accordance with his views] so frequently reiterated to me to press for the return of *Blenheim* and Destroyer Flotilla from Dardanelles, replacing them by French destroyers. The whole Turkish naval force is quite a negligible quantity even with German officers (with the *Goeben* knocked out, as we know her to be!), and therefore French destroyers and French submarines, if more are wanted, should be called upon. The Australian submarine ought to come home to the much required submarine duties in the North Sea. I understand she is the best we have and [it is] therefore inexcusable to waste her on the Turks.

F.

I could not agree to this, as of course it would have paralysed the Dardanelles Fleet and destroyed the plans which the staff were maturing. At the same time Sir Arthur Wilson continued to press for action against Zeebrugge in pursuance of his minute of January 4.[1]

This double pressure brought matters to a head.

January 25, 1915.

First Lord.

I have no desire to continue a useless resistance in the War Council to plans I cannot concur in, but I would ask that the enclosed may be printed and circulated to its members before the next meeting.

F.

MEMORANDUM BY THE FIRST SEA LORD ON THE POSITION OF THE BRITISH FLEET AND ITS POLICY OF STEADY PRESSURE.

January 25, 1915.

At recent meetings of the War Council projects have been discussed for joint naval and military operations against places on the coast as well as for similar operations by the Navy alone. Up to the present, however, no clear state-

[1] See page 149.

ment has been made at the War Council as to what our naval policy in this war is to be. Some statement of principle appears a fundamental necessity to any decision in regard to naval action against coast fortifications.

Our naval policy must be regulated by that of the enemy. It is the policy of Germany to avoid a decision at sea and to keep the command in dispute as long as possible while they concentrate their offensive powers on the army ashore. This defensive attitude has been adopted deliberately, notwithstanding that it has involved the sacrifice of the whole of the German mercantile shipping and oversea trade, and has subjected Germany for six months to the whole pressure of our sea power. This tremendous sacrifice has been imposed on Germany by two causes: first by her numerical inferiority to our fleet; and second because an unsuccessful action and the destruction of the High Sea Fleet might place Germany in a position of naval inferiority to Russia and expose the Baltic coast to invasion; and since the time of Frederick the Great, Germany has always been nervous of this flank, but on this subject I have presented another paper.

The deliberate adoption of the defensive, being contrary to the tradition of German military policy, and involving such sacrifices and losses, must be most galling to the German people. They only await a favourable moment to pass from the defensive to the offensive. They have already endeavoured without success to scatter our naval strength by attacks on our trade, and not much more successfully to reduce our main strength by submarines and mines.

Of all strategical attitudes that of a naval defensive as adopted by Germany is the most difficult to meet and the most deeply fraught with danger for the opposing belligerent, if he is weak ashore as we are, and his enemy strong ashore as Germany is. Nevertheless, all through our history we have had to encounter similar situations. The policy of the French in nearly all our naval wars was the policy which Germany has now adopted. Our reply to-day must be the same as our reply was then, namely, to be content to remain in possession of our command of the sea, husbanding our strength until the gradual pressure of sea power compels the enemy's fleet to make an effort to attack us at a disadvantage.

In the Seven Years' War the French preserved their fleet

from a decision for five years. Nelson was off Toulon for two years. By comparison, the six months during which Sir John Jellicoe has had to wait are short, and they have been relieved by incidents which have considerably diminished the enemy's forces.

The pressure of sea power to-day is probably not less but greater and more rapid in action than in the past; but it is still a slow process and requires great patience. In time it will almost certainly compel the enemy to seek a decision at sea, particularly when he begins to realise that his offensive on land is broken. This is one reason for husbanding our resources. Another reason is that the prolongation of war at sea tends to raise up fresh enemies for the dominant naval power in a much higher degree than it does on land owing to the exasperation of neutrals. This tendency will only be checked by the conviction of an overwhelming naval supremacy behind the nation exercising sea power.

We play into Germany's hands if we risk fighting ships in any subsidiary operations such as coastal bombardments or the attack of fortified places without military co-operation, for we thereby increase the possibility that the Germans may be able to engage our fleet with some approach to equality of strength. The sole justification of coastal bombardments and attacks by the fleet on fortified places, such as the contemplated prolonged bombardment of the Dardanelles Forts by our fleet, is to force a decision at sea, and so far and no farther can they be justified.

So long as the German High Sea Fleet preserves its present great strength and splendid gunnery efficiency, so long is it imperative and indeed vital that no operation whatever should be undertaken by the British Fleet, calculated to impair its present superiority, which is none too great in view of the heavy losses already experienced in valuable ships, and in valuable officers and men, whose places cannot be filled in the period of the war (in which respect the Navy differs so materially from the Army). Even the older ships should not be risked, for they cannot be lost without losing men and they form our only reserve behind the Grand Fleet.

Ours is the supreme necessity and difficulty of remaining passive except in so far as we can force the enemy to abandon his defensive and to expose his fleet to a general action.

In the French wars we aimed at this by cutting off the enemy's trade, and by joint naval and military operations against his territory.

We are already to a great extent carrying out the first method. To cut off the enemy's trade we ought to aim at a complete closing of the North Sea, and the declaration of a blockade. The machinery of a blockade is already established and maintained between Scilly and Ushant, and between the Hebrides and Norway. It is remarkable and beyond all praise and admiration how our patrols[1] have, in the furious gales that have continuously raged all this winter, so completely blocked the passages into the North Sea as to identify every steamer that has sailed from foreign ports for the North Sea. Difficulties with neutrals and adherence to an obsolete international law based on the conditions of a century ago, and quite inapplicable to technical developments of modern naval warfare, have alone prevented us from declaring an actual blockade.

The second method of forcing the fleet out, that is to say, by attacks on the enemy's territory, is difficult. Attacks on German colonies are not sufficient to tempt it out and joint operations against continental Germany are impracticable in view of the enemy's strength in submarines.

It has been said that the first function of the British Army is to assist the fleet in obtaining command of the sea. This might be accomplished by military co-operation with the Navy in such operations as the attack of Zeebrugge or the forcing of the Dardanelles, which might bring out the German and Turkish fleets respectively. Apparently, however, this is not to be. The English Army is apparently to continue to provide a small sector of the Allied front in France, where it no more helps the Navy than if it were at Timbuctoo.

Being already in possession of all that a powerful fleet can give a country we should continue quietly to enjoy the advantage without dissipating our strength in operations that cannot improve the position.

FISHER.

This paper was not, I think, except for the last few characteristic sentences, Lord Fisher's own composition. It had been

[1] The Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

prepared in accordance with his directions. It was, of course, absolutely counter to all my convictions. No one, certainly, wished to 'dissipate our strength in operations that cannot improve the position.' To write thus was to beg the question. But the naval policy emerging from its last sentence would have condemned us to complete inactivity. It was no doubt the policy pursued by the Commander-in-Chief and the Admiralty after I quitted office. It was the policy which led directly to the supreme submarine peril in 1917.

* * * * *

Meanwhile on the 26th arrived the Russian reply to my telegram informing the Grand Duke of the Dardanelles plans. Sir Edward Grey forwarded it to me with the following remarks:—

This is the Russian reply about Dardanelles. It shows that, though Russia cannot help, the operation has her entire goodwill and the Grand Duke attaches the greatest importance to its success.

This fact may be used with Augagneur[1] to show that we must go ahead with it and that failure to do so will disappoint Russia and react most unfavourably upon the military situation, about which France and we are specially concerned just now. . . .

Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey.

January 25, 1915.

General Williams has sent me memorandum by Grand Duke to the following effect on proposed operations against Dardanelles:—

Memorandum begins by stating appeal to Allies for help was made because H.I. Highness was determined not to weaken forces operating against Germans and Austrians. Appeal was not accompanied by any suggestion as to the method of execution as Russia had not the means of directly assisting in carrying out a plan of action against Turkey.

Russian Dreadnoughts were not finished; they had no

[1] The French Minister of Marine.

submarines of modern type and only an insufficient number of swift Destroyers. Their Fleet was therefore not more than equal of Turkish Fleet and that only when all the ships were together. Russian ships only carry four days' coal, and coaling at sea in the Black Sea was rendered impossible in the winter by bad weather. The nearest Russian Base was moreover 24 hours from the entrance of the Bosphorus. Guns of the Bosphorus batteries as compared both in number and power with those placed in Russian ships were such as to give little hope of a successful attack by the latter.

Reinforcement of Black Sea Squadron by Dreadnought *Imperatritza Marie*, by submarines of modern type, and by Destroyers would of course change all this; but these reinforcements would not be completed until the month of May.

The most effective assistance which could be given to Allied Fleet after forcing of Straits would be for Russia to land troops. This was, however, impossible as it would necessitate at least two Army Corps being withdrawn from the principal theatre of war. This was, memorandum continues, clear and truthful statement of Russia's position, and of the reasons which prevented her from helping the Allies, great as was her desire to do so.

Memorandum concludes by stating in opinion of the Grand Duke any military action against Turkey of the kind contemplated would be bound to have important results for the Allied cause. It could not be hoped to crush Turkey in the Caucasus—even capture of Erzerum would not effect object. But a successful attack against Turkey would react on the principal enemy (German) line; it would paralyse Turkey; and would infallibly be a deciding factor in determining the attitude of neutral States in the Balkans.

In forwarding me above memorandum, General Williams stated in conversation with himself the Grand Duke had spoken in very much the same sense as above, but that H.I. Highness had strongly emphasised telling effect which successful carrying out of operations contemplated would have on Turkey and Balkans.

I now addressed myself to the First Sea Lord's paper which I forwarded to the Prime Minister with the following reply, of which I sent Lord Fisher a copy.

Memorandum by the First Lord.

January 27, 1915.

The main principle of the First Sea Lord's paper is indisputable. The foundation of our naval policy is the maintenance in a secure position of a Battle Fleet with all ancillary vessels capable at any time of defeating the German High Sea Fleet in battle, and reserved for that purpose above and before all other duties. This principle has been and will be fully and strictly observed.

The ships engaged in Sunday's action [the Dogger Bank] on both sides represented very fairly, so far as individual quality is concerned, the classes of vessels which would be opposed in a general fleet action. The event proved that a superiority of 5 to 4 in our favour is decisive. On these terms the German ships thought of nothing but retreat, and the British of attack. Very heavy loss was inflicted upon the Germans: one ship was sunk out of 4, and 2 other ships most severely damaged. Had the action been fought out, the destruction of the others was certain.

We are now no longer in the region of mere speculation. The relative qualities of seamanship and gunnery of the two sides have been put to the test and reveal no inferiority on our part, while the superiority of the 13·5-inch gun and the effect of heavier metal generally has now been shown. There is therefore every reason to believe that the best 21 British battleships and battle-cruisers could defeat decisively at even numbers the 21 German Dreadnoughts. Any British ships additional to this number must be regarded as an insurance against unexpected losses by mine and torpedo.

On the declaration of war the maximum numbers available in Home Waters on both sides were: Great Britain, 24+2 *Lord Nelsons;* Germany, 21. Since then the following capital units have joined the Fleet: *Queen Elizabeth*, *Erin*, *Agincourt*, *Benbow*, *Emperor of India*, *Tiger*, *Indomitable;* and the following will join during the next month: *Inflexible*, *Invincible*, and perhaps *Australia;* against which we have lost *Audacious*. In addition to these the Grand Fleet and Harwich Striking Force have been strengthened by eighteen cruisers and thirty-six destroyers.[1]

[1] Names omitted.

Meanwhile the German Fleet in Home Waters has received no new accession of strength and has suffered the following losses in modern ships: *Blücher*, *Magdeburg*, *Köln*, *Mainz*, and 10 or 12 Destroyers.

It should be recognised that the progressive improvement in types has been so marked that ships over 12 years old can only play a secondary part in the war. Their speed would probably prevent them from participating in the main action, except against each other, and would expose them to almost certain destruction if overtaken by the latest types. However, in this pre-Dreadnought class we have also an immense superiority. The 8 *King Edwards* are already a part of the Grand Fleet, and it can be strengthened at any time by the addition of the 2 *Lord Nelsons*[1] and the 6 remaining *Formidables*. This fleet would easily and certainly destroy the whole of the German pre-Dreadnought battle fleet.

During the course of the present year 8 battleships, 5 of over 26 knots speed and the whole armed with 15-inch guns, constituting a squadron probably capable of fighting by itself the two best squadrons of the German Navy, will be available for reinforcement or replacement of casualties. Since the war commenced 8 light cruisers have already been commissioned for service in Home Waters; 8 more will be delivered in the next three months, and 4 more in the three months after that. All these cruisers are superior in speed and gun power to any of the German light cruisers afloat. There will also be available during the year 56 destroyers, between 50 and 75 submarines, 24 small gunboats for subsidiary duties, together with other miscellaneous auxiliary vessels. It is therefore certain that the strength of the Grand Fleet, which was originally sufficient, has now been greatly augmented and will continually increase. The first principle laid down by the First Sea Lord is thus most fully met.

The second vital function of the Navy is the protection of trade and the control of sea communications. All German cruisers and gunboats abroad have been sunk, blocked in, or interned, with the exception of the *Karlsruhe* and *Dresden*, which are hiding. There are great doubts as to the efficiency of the *Karlsruhe*, of whom nothing has been heard for nearly

[1] The 2 Lord Nelsons (i.e., *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*) had not yet been added by Lord Fisher to the Dardanelles Fleet.

three months. There are believed to be 2 German armed merchantmen at large (the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*). All the rest of the 42 prepared for arming and which it has been intended to let loose on the trade routes have been blockaded, interned, sunk, or captured. To deal with the 2 German cruisers and the 2 armed liners which are not yet run down, there are now, apart from Home Waters and the Mediterranean, the following British vessels:—

10 armoured or large cruisers.
31 light cruisers (including 2 in Suez Canal).
19 armed merchant cruisers (4 in Red Sea included).
19 self-defensive armed merchantmen.

In addition to the British ships available, there is the Japanese Navy and such French and Russian ships as are outside the Mediterranean and their respective home waters.

Meanwhile the other functions of the Navy, viz., the control of the English Channel and its approaches, the patrol of the Straits of Dover, the patrol flotillas of the East Coast, and the special Harwich Striking Force, are all provided for.

Over and above all the foregoing, and after meeting all purely naval claims, we have available the following battleships completely manned and supplied with their own ammunition and its reserve:—

5 *Duncans*.
6 *Canopuses*.
9 *Majestics*.
1 *Royal Sovereign*.

Between the beginning of April and the end of July we shall also receive 14 heavily armoured, shallow-draft Monitors; 2 armed with two 15-inch guns, 4 armed with two 14-inch guns, and 8 armed with two 12-inch guns. These last 8 will be armed by taking the turrets out of 4 of the *Majestics*. It is this force which it is proposed to use for special services and for bombarding as may be necessary from time to time in furtherance of objects of great strategic and political importance, among which the following may be specifically mentioned:—

1. The operations at the Dardanelles;
2. The support of the left flank of the Army;
3. The bombardment of Zeebrugge; and later on
4. The seizure of Borkum.

It is believed that with care and skill losses may be reduced to a minimum and certainly kept within limits fully justified by the importance and necessity of the operations. It cannot be said that this employment of ships which are (except the *Duncans*) not needed and not suited to fight in the line of battle, conflicts with any of the sound principles of naval policy set forth by the First Sea Lord. Not to use them where necessary because of some fear that there will be an outcry if a ship is lost would be wrong, and, if a certain proportion of loss of life among officers and men of the Royal Navy serving on these ships can achieve important objects of the war and save a very much greater loss of life among our comrades and allies on shore, we ought certainly not to shrink from it.

W. S. C.

The First Sea Lord could not in his heart feel at all anxious about the Grand Fleet margin. He knew that I knew his real convictions about it. He did not attempt to continue the discussion on a false basis: but he expressed an intention of not attending the War Council which was fixed for the next day—the 28th. This was, of course, impossible. I insisted that he should be present, and arranged for a private meeting for both of us with the Prime Minister before the Council. To this Lord Fisher consented.

We repaired accordingly to Mr. Asquith's room twenty minutes before the War Council was to meet. No written record of this discussion has been preserved, but there is no dispute about it. 'Save in respect of some points of slight importance as regards the precise language used,' say the Dardanelles Commissioners, 'the accounts given us by Mr. Asquith and Lord Fisher, as regards what occurred at this private meeting, tally.' Lord Fisher indicated very briefly his objections to both the Zeebrugge and Dardanelles schemes, and indicated his preference for a great operation in the Baltic or for a general advance of the Army along the Belgian coast with strong naval support. Lord Fisher, say the Dardanelles Commissioners, 'did not criticise the attack on the

Gallipoli Peninsula on its own merits. Neither did he mention to the Prime Minister that he had any thought of resigning if his opinions were overruled.' This is quite true. I contended that both Zeebrugge and the Dardanelles scheme should be undertaken, but that if either were to be dropped it should be Zeebrugge, to which the First Sea Lord seemed more particularly opposed. The Prime Minister, after hearing both sides, expressed his concurrence with my views, and decided that Zeebrugge should be dropped but that the Dardanelles should go forward. Lord Fisher seemed on the whole content, and I went downstairs with him under the impression that all was well.

The Council was already waiting. Colonel Hankey's record of the discussion which followed has already been made public in the Report of the Dardanelles Commission.

'Mr. Churchill said that he had communicated to the Grand Duke Nicholas and to the French Admiralty the project for a naval attack on the Dardanelles. The Grand Duke had replied with enthusiasm, and believed that this [attack] might assist him. The French Admiralty had also sent a favourable reply, and had promised co-operation. Preparations were in hand for commencing about the middle of February. He asked if the War Council attached importance to this operation, which undoubtedly involved some risks?

'Lord Fisher said that he understood that this question would not be raised to-day. The Prime Minister was well aware of his own views in regard to it.

'The Prime Minister said that, in view of the steps which had already been taken, the question could not well be left in abeyance.

'Lord Kitchener considered the naval attack to be vitally important. If successful, its effect would be equivalent to that of a successful campaign fought with the new armies. One merit of the scheme was that, if satisfactory progress was not made, the attack could be broken off.

'Mr. Balfour pointed out that a successful attack on the Dardanelles would achieve the following results:—

'It would cut the Turkish army in two;

'It would put Constantinople under our control;
'It would give us the advantage of having the Russian wheat, and enable Russia to resume exports;
'This would restore the Russian exchanges, which were falling owing to her inability to export, and causing great embarrassment;
'It would also open a passage to the Danube;
'It was difficult to imagine a more helpful operation.
'Sir Edward Grey said it would also finally settle the attitude of Bulgaria and the whole of the Balkans.
'Mr. Churchill said that the naval Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean had expressed his belief that it could be done. He required from three weeks to a month to accomplish it. The necessary ships were already on their way to the Dardanelles. In reply to Mr. Balfour, he said that, in response to his enquiries, the French had expressed their confidence that Austrian submarines would not get as far as the Dardanelles.
'Lord Haldane asked if the Turks had any submarines.
'Mr. Churchill said that, so far as could be ascertained, they had not. He did not anticipate that we should sustain much loss in the actual bombardment, but in sweeping for mines some losses must be expected. The real difficulties would begin after the outer forts had been silenced, and it became necessary to attack the Narrows. He explained the plan of attack on a map.'

This record does not, however, complete the story. During the Council an incident occurred which has subsequently obtained much publicity. Here is Lord Fisher's own account:—[1]

9th Meeting of War Council, January 28, 1915, 11.30 *a.m.*
(*Note.*—Before this meeting the Prime Minister discussed with Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher the proposed Dardanelles operations and decided in favour of considering the project in opposition to Lord Fisher's opinion.)

THE DARDANELLES.

Mr. Churchill asked if the War Council attached importance to the proposed Dardanelles operations, which undoubtedly involved risks.

[1] 'Memories,' by Lord Fisher, page 80.

Lord Fisher said that he had understood that this question was not to be raised at this meeting. The Prime Minister knew his (Lord Fisher's) views on the subject.

The Prime Minister said that, in view of what had already been done, the question could not be left in abeyance.

(*Note.*—Thereupon Lord Fisher left the Council table. He was followed by Lord Kitchener, who asked him what he intended to do. Lord Fisher replied to Lord Kitchener that he would not return to the Council table, and would resign his office as First Sea Lord. Lord Kitchener then pointed out to Lord Fisher that he (Lord Fisher) was the only dissentient, and that the Dardanelles operations had been decided upon by the Prime Minister; and he urged on Lord Fisher that his duty to his country was to go on carrying out the duties of First Sea Lord. After further talk Lord Fisher reluctantly gave in to Lord Kitchener and went back to the Council table.)*

*It must be emphasised here, as well as in regard to Lord Kitchener's statement to the War Council dated May 14, 1915, that Lord Fisher considered that it would be both improper and unseemly for him to enter into an altercation either at the War Council or elsewhere with his chief Mr. Churchill, the First Lord. Silence or resignation was the right course.

After the meeting was over, we adjourned for several hours. Although the War Council had come to a decision with which I heartily agreed, and no voice had been raised against the naval plan, I thought I must come to a clear understanding with the First Sea Lord. I had noticed the incident of his leaving the table and Lord Kitchener following him to the window and arguing with him, and I did not know what was the upshot in his mind. After luncheon I asked him to come and see me in my room and we had a long talk. I strongly urged him not to turn back from the Dardanelles operation; and in the end, after a long and very friendly discussion which covered the whole Admiralty and naval position, he definitely consented to undertake it. There never has been any dispute between us subsequently as to this. 'When I finally decided

to go in,' said Lord Fisher to the Dardanelles Commissioners, 'I went the whole hog, *totus porcus*.' We then repaired to the afternoon War Council Meeting, Admiral Oliver, Chief of the Staff, coming with us, and I announced on behalf of the Admiralty, and with the agreement of Lord Fisher, that we had decided to undertake the task with which the War Council had charged us so urgently. This I took as the point of final decision. After it, I never looked back. We had left the region of discussion and consultation, of balancings and misgivings. The matter had passed into the domain of action.

I am in no way concealing the great and continuous pressure which I put upon the old Admiral. This pressure was reinforced by Lord Kitchener's personal influence, by the collective opinion of the War Council, and by the authoritative decision of the Prime Minister. It was a pressure not only of opinion, which was overwhelming, but of arguments to which he could find no answer. Moreover, there was in addition on the technical side a very great weight of support at the Admiralty. 'Naval opinion was unanimous,' said Lord Fisher afterwards, 'Mr. Churchill had them all on his side. I was the only rebel.'

Was it wrong to put this pressure upon the First Sea Lord? I cannot think so. War is a business of terrible pressures, and persons who take part in it must fail if they are not strong enough to withstand them. As a mere politician and civilian, I would never have agreed to the Dardanelles project if I had not believed in it. I would have done my utmost to break it down in argument and to marshall opinion against it. Had I been in Lord Fisher's position and held his views, I would have refused point blank. There was no need for him to resign. Only the First Sea Lord can order the ships to steam and the guns to fire. First Sea Lords have to stand up to facts and take their decisions resolutely at the moment of choice. To go back on a decision after an enterprise has been launched,

risks run and sacrifices made, is quite a different matter. During the period of choice, a man must fight for his opinion with the utmost tenacity. But once the choice has been made, then the business must be carried through in loyal comradeship.

* * * * *

Let us now see exactly what it was the Admiralty had committed itself to do.

We had undertaken to begin a serious bombardment of the Dardanelles forts, and to attempt, without the aid of an army, by a new and gradual method of piecemeal reduction, to fight our way slowly into the Marmora. But we believed we could withdraw from this operation at almost any stage if the difficulties and the Turkish resistance proved unexpectedly great. And so far as the Admiralty was concerned —apart, that is to say, from general considerations of policy and prestige—we could indisputably have broken off the operation at any point; and we did in fact do so to my great regret after March 18. Further, the ships we proposed to risk were almost all of them valueless for any other purpose. Four of them, indeed, had already been condemned to be scrapped, and most of the others were of similar type. Had they not been used in this way they would have rusted in our southern dockyards. They were only fit for subsidiary bombarding operations. They were surplus to all the vessels by which our supremacy at sea was maintained. It would have been simple murder of their crews to put them where modern German battleships might catch them. They were quite useless for a fleet action. Yet here in the Dardanelles these old vessels might, if all went well, change the history of the world, cut the Turkish Empire in two, paralyse its capital, unite the Balkan States against our enemies, rescue Serbia, help the Grand Duke in the main operations of the war, and by shortening its duration save countless lives.

We had undertaken this operation, not because we thought it was the ideal method of attack, but because we were told that no military force was available, and in response to the appeals for help from Lord Kitchener and the Grand Duke. We had undertaken it with our surplus resources *after* we had successfully and fully discharged and provided for all those great duties of the Navy, the safety of the British Isles, the clearance of the seas, the protection of commerce, the transportation of troops—for which perhaps the Admiralty deserved some measure of confidence and gratitude. So far as I am concerned, I undertook this task out of a sincere wish to aid the common cause and to make the weight of the Navy tell as effectively as possible. This, I thought, was my duty.

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I have asked myself in these later years, What would have happened if I had taken Lord Fisher's advice and refused point blank to take any action at the Dardanelles unless or until the War Office produced on their responsibility an adequate army to storm the Gallipoli Peninsula? Should we by holding out in this way have secured a sufficient army and a good plan? Should we have had all the advantages of the Dardanelles policy without the mistakes and misfortunes for which we had to pay so dearly? The Dardanelles Commissioners, studying the story from an entirely different angle, obviously felt that if there had been no naval plan in the field, there would later on have been a really well-conceived and well-concerted amphibious attack. No one can probe this imaginary situation very far, and it is impossible to pronounce. But I think myself that nothing less than the ocular demonstration and practical proof of the strategic meaning of the Dardanelles, and the effects of attacking it on every Balkan and Mediterranean Power, would have lighted up men's minds sufficiently to make a large abstraction of troops from the main theatre a possibility. I do not believe that anything

less than those tremendous hopes, reinforced as they were by dire necessity, would have enabled Lord Kitchener to wrest an army from France and Flanders. In cold blood, it could never have been done. General Headquarters, and the French General Staff would have succeeded in shattering any plan put forward so long as it was a mere theoretical proposal for a large diversion of force to the Southern theatre. At one moment they would have told us that, owing to the Russian failure, great masses of Germans were returning to the West to deliver an overwhelming offensive: at another that they could not spare a round of ammunition and were in desperate straits for the want of it: at a third, that they had a wonderful plan for a great offensive which would shatter the German line and drive them out of a large portion of France. All these arguments were in fact used, and their effect was, as will be seen, to cripple the Dardanelles operations even after they had actually begun. How much more would they have overwhelmed any paper plan for an Eastern campaign. There would have been no Dardanelles with its hopes, its glories, its losses and its ultimate heart-breaking failure.

But who shall say what would have happened instead? A few weeks' more delay in the entry of Italy into the war, and the continuance of the great Russian defeats in Galicia would have rendered that entry improbable in the extreme. A few more months' acceleration of the Bulgarian declaration of war against us, and the whole of the Balkans, except Serbia, might have been rallied to the Teutonic standards. The flower of the Turkish Army, which was largely destroyed on the Gallipoli Peninsula, would certainly have fought us or our allies somewhere else. The destruction of the Russian Army of the Caucasus could not have been long averted. I do not believe that by adopting the negative attitude we should ever have got our good and well-conceived amphibious operation. We should have got no operation at all. We should have done nothing, and have been confronted with diplomatic and mili-

tary reactions wholly unfavourable throughout the Southern and Eastern theatre. Searching my heart, I cannot regret the effort. It was good to go as far as we did.

Not to persevere—that was the crime.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GENESIS OF THE MILITARY ATTACK

An Army after all—At Least Ten Divisions Available—Lord Kitchener in the Toils—His Immense Power—Paralysis of the General Staff—East or West—His Other Burdens—His Courage and Kindness—My Mission to Sir John French, January 29—My Report—Venizelos Declines the Proffered Division—The Admiralty Begin to Press for Troops—Quasi-Political Factors—Decisions of February 16—The Day of Resolve—Conflicting Pressures upon Lord Kitchener—War Council of February 19: Lord Kitchener Withholds the 29th Division—The Day of Recoil—Councils of February 24 and 26—My Memorandum of February 25—The Cancelled Transports—My Protest.

UP to this point in the story of the Dardanelles the War Council and the Admiralty had accepted unquestioningly the basis that no troops were available for offensive operations against Turkey. In his first letter to me of January 2, Lord Kitchener had said: 'We have no troops to land anywhere. . . . We shall not be ready for anything big for some months.' The first telegram to Admiral Carden of January 3 had asked: 'Are you of opinion that it is practicable to force the Dardanelles *using ships alone?*' At the evening meeting of the War Council on January 28 when the final decision was taken, Lord Kitchener repeated: 'We have at present no troops to spare.' It was on that foundation alone that all our decisions in favour of a purely naval attack had been taken. But henceforward a series of new facts and pressures came into play which gradually but unceasingly changed the character and enormously extended the scale of the enterprise. Under these influences in less than two months the naval attack, with its lack of certainty but with its limited costs and risks became subsidiary, and in its place there arose a military development of great magnitude. Over this new plan the Admiralty had no responsible control. Our advice did

not prevail; our criticisms were not welcomed; and even enquiries became a matter of delicacy and tact. Nevertheless, by the results of this military operation we had to stand or fall.

After all there was an Army. From the very moment when the purely naval attack had been finally resolved troops from many quarters began to come into view. From that moment the pressure to employ troops in one way or another grew steadily in every mind. The decision to abandon or postpone indefinitely the advances along the Belgian coast liberated portions of the reinforcements destined for Sir John French. The feeble character of the Turkish attack on Egypt and its repulse liberated the greater part of the Army concentrated there. The continued improvement in the training of the Australian and Territorial troops in this army increasingly fitted them for offensive operations. The suppression of the rebellion in South Africa had removed other anxieties. Meanwhile the First and Second of the New Armies (in all twelve divisions) were improving in training and progressing in equipment. A number of Territorial divisions fully equipped and in good order, whose training was now advanced, were also available at home. The large numbers of armed and organised soldiers in the United Kingdom should have removed all apprehension of oversea invasion.

At intervals during the next three months there were actually ordered to the Dardanelles:—

From England.

The 29th Division.
Two first-line Territorial divisions.
The Royal Naval Division.
A Yeomanry mounted division.

From Egypt.

Two Australian divisions.
One extra Australian brigade.
The Lancashire Territorial Division.
One Indian brigade.

From France.

Two French divisions.

All these troops were available for moving at this moment. The transport for their conveyance by sea could readily have been procured. All, or their equivalent, and more were subsequently sent. Together they comprised an army of at least 150,000 men. This army could have been concentrated in the Eastern Mediterranean in readiness to intervene at any point selected, some time before the end of March. If at any time in January it had been deliberately decided to use such an army, according to some good plan and with a resolute purpose, in a great combined operation to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula and thus open the passage for the Fleet, few will now doubt that a complete victory would have been gained. On the other hand, apart from the 29th Division, all these troops had been raised or permanently embodied only since the outbreak of the war. To open a new campaign on a large scale was a most serious decision, in view of their partially trained character and of the general shortage of munitions. This was the justification for the naval attack. It also within its limits presented a logical and consistent scheme of war. Either plan was defensible. But for what happened there can be no defence except human infirmity. To drift into a new campaign piecemeal and without any definite decision or careful plan, would have been scouted by every one. Yet so obliquely were these issues presented, so baffling were the personal factors involved, that the War Council were drawn insensibly and irresistibly into the gulf.

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The workings of Lord Kitchener's mind constituted at this period a feature almost as puzzling as the great war problem itself. His prestige and authority were immense. He was the sole mouthpiece of War Office opinion in the War Council.

Every one had the greatest admiration for his character, and every one felt fortified, amid the terrible and incalculable events of the opening months of the war, by his commanding presence. When he gave a decision it was invariably accepted as final. He was never, to my belief, overruled, by the War Council or the Cabinet in any military matter, great or small. No single unit was ever sent or withheld contrary, not merely to his agreement, but to his advice. Scarcely anyone ever ventured to argue with him in Council. Respect for the man, sympathy for him in his immense labours, confidence in his professional judgment, and the belief that he had plans deeper and wider than any we could see, silenced misgivings and disputes, whether in the Council or at the War Office. All-powerful, imperturbable, reserved, he dominated absolutely our counsels at this time in all that concerned the organisation and employment of the armies.

Yet behind this imposing and splendid front lay many weaknesses, evidences of which became increasingly disquieting. The Secretary of State for War had burdens laid upon him which no man, no three men even of his great capacity, could properly discharge. He had absorbed the whole War Office into his spacious personality. The General Staff was completely in abeyance, save as a machine for supplying him with information. Even as such a machine it was woefully weak. All the ablest officers and leading and strongest minds in the General Staff and Army Council, with the exception of Sir John Cowans, the Quartermaster-General, had hurried eagerly out of the country with the Expeditionary Force and were now in France, feeling that they ought to control the whole conduct of the war from the highly localised point of view of the British General Headquarters at St. Omer. In their place, filling vitally important situations, were officers on the retired list or men whose opinions had never counted weightily in British military thought. These officers were petrified by Lord Kitchener's personality and position. They

none of them showed the natural force and ability to argue questions out with him vigorously as man to man. He towered up in his uniform as a Field-Marshal and Cabinet Minister besides, and they saluted as subordinates on a drill-ground. They never presented him with well-considered general reasonings about the whole course of the war. They stood ready to execute his decisions to the best of their ability. It was left to the Members of the War Council to write papers upon the broad strategic view of the war. It was left to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, to discern and proclaim to the Cabinet in unmistakable terms the impending military collapse of Russia. It was left to me to offer at any rate one method of influencing the political situation in the Near East in default of comprehensive military schemes. And Lord Kitchener himself was left to face the rushing, swirling torrent of events with no rock of clear, well-thought-out doctrine and calculation at his back.

In consequence he gave decisions now in this direction, now in that, which were markedly influenced by the daily impressions he sustained, which impressions were often of a fleeting nature. As a result his decisions were sometimes contradictory. He was torn between two perfectly clear-cut views of the war, both urged upon him with force and passion, with wealth of fact and argument. All the leading soldiers in the British Army, all the august authority of the French High Command asserted that the sole path to victory lay in sending every single man and gun and shell to the French front to 'kill Germans' and break their lines in the West. All the opinion of the War Council, which certainly contained men who had established themselves as the leading figures of the public life of their generation, was focused upon the Southern and Eastern theatres as the scene for the campaign of 1915. Kitchener himself was strongly drawn in this direction by his own Eastern interest and knowledge. He saw to the full the vision of what success in this quarter would mean, but he also felt what we

did not feel in the same degree—the fearful alternative pressure to which he was continually subjected from the French front.

The problem was not insoluble. The task of reconciling these apparently opposed conceptions was not impossible. A well-conceived and elaborated plan and programme could have been devised in January for action in the Near East in March, April, May or even June, and for a subsequent great concentration and operation on the Western front in the autumn of 1915, or better still under far more favourable conditions in the spring of 1916. The successive development of both policies in their proper sequence and each in its integrity was perfectly feasible if the great authorities concerned could have been won over. However, in the event Lord Kitchener succumbed to conflicting forces and competing policies.

Beside these trials and burdens, to which he was certainly not able to rise superior, stood the whole vast business of recruiting, organising and equipping the New Armies; and behind this again there now marched steadily into view a series of problems connected with the manufacture and purchase of munitions upon a scale never dreamed of by any human being up till this period. These problems comprised the entire social and industrial life of the country and touched the whole economic and financial system of the world. Add to this the daily exposition of all military business in Cabinet and in Council—a process most trying and burdensome to Lord Kitchener, and one in which he felt himself at a disadvantage: add, further, the continuous series of decisions upon executive matters covering the vast field of the war, including important operations and expeditions which were campaigns in themselves, and it will be realised that the strain that descended upon the King's greatest subject was far more than mortal man could bear.

It must, however, be stated that Lord Kitchener in no way sought to lighten these terrific burdens. On the contrary, he

resented promptly any attempt to interfere in and even scrutinise his vast domains of responsibility. He resisted tenaciously the efforts which were made from January onward to remove the production of munitions of all kinds from his control as Secretary of State. He devolved on to subordinates as little as he could. He sought to manage the Great War by the same sort of personal control that he had used with so much success in the command of the tiny Nile Expedition. He kept the General Staff, or what was left of it, in a condition of complete subservience and practical abeyance. He even reached out, as his Cabinet Office justified, into political spheres in questions of Ireland, of Temperance, and of Industrial Organisation.

It is idle at this date to affect to disregard or conceal these facts. Indeed, the greatness of Lord Kitchener and his lasting claims upon the respect and gratitude of succeeding generations of his fellow-countrymen, for whose cause and safety he fought with single-hearted purpose and a giant's strength, will only be fortified by the fullest comprehension of his character and of his difficulties. If this story and the facts and documents on which it rests constitute any reflection upon his military policy, I must also testify to the overwhelming weight of the burdens laid upon him, to his extraordinary patience and courage in all the difficulties and perplexities through which we were passing, and to his unvarying kindness and courtesy to me.

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The War Council of January 28, besides deciding definitely and finally in favour of the naval attempt upon the Dardanelles, showed itself earnestly desirous of procuring some military force to influence the political situation in the Balkans. It was not thought at this time that any force which could be collected would be equal to the storming of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and this operation never received the slightest countenance at this juncture. All that was hoped for was to

secure the subtraction from the forces in England but destined for France, of one or two divisions, including the 29th Division (our remaining Regular Division), and the employment of this force as a lever to encourage M. Venizelos and the Greek King and Government to enter the war on our side in aid of Serbia. In the course of the discussion, Lord Kitchener suggested that I should be sent to the British General Headquarters in France by the Council to put the whole case before Sir John French, with whom my intimate and cordial relations were known.

I accepted the commission and started the next morning. On the 29th and 30th I discussed the whole situation with Sir John French and earnestly pressed him to facilitate the wishes of the Council in view of the immense possibilities open in the Balkans. The Commander-in-Chief's view was that the naval attack on the Dardanelles, on the practicability and technical details of which he could not pronounce, was in principle a most valuable and useful operation; but that any attempt at heavy military operations in the new theatre, such as would be entailed in the forcible occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, would be an altogether unjustifiable strain upon our military resources, and might lead to disaster either in France or at Gallipoli through inadequate numbers and ammunition being available for both fronts. He was willing, however, to defer to the wishes of the Council by releasing in March for political purposes in the Balkan States two of the four new divisions which were to come to France. On my return I reported in this sense to Lord Kitchener:—

First Lord to Secretary of State for War.

January 31, 1915.

I had several conversations, as desired by the War Council and yourself, with Sir John French during the two days I was at his headquarters. He hopes very much that the arrangements he has made with Joffre will be allowed to go forward. These arrangements comprise Joffre relieving him on

the frontage of one corps on the extreme right of the British line, and French relieving Joffre on the frontage of two corps from Wytschaete round the Ypres salient to Dixmude. This achieves the important object of giving the British General control of all troops, including the Belgian Army and some French detachments, from a point south of Armentières to the sea. If this arrangement were altered Joffre would be greatly disappointed. It would be useless for Sir John French to address him on the subject; and if it were decided not to send the four divisions as arranged, the matter would have to be settled between the Governments.

When this operation of relieving the two French corps has been completed, Sir John French will have five British corps, strengthened by twenty-four territorial battalions, in the line, and two corps and the cavalry in reserve. With this he would feel secure. He cannot recommend any weakening of this force; nor on strategic grounds does he favour a diversion in South-Eastern Europe. But if the Government wish him to hold two of these four divisions of reserve at their disposal from the middle of March onward, he would do so, and the divisions could be withdrawn if required, provided, of course, that no great emergency, either defensive or offensive, was occurring on his front. I pointed out at this stage that by March 15 we should be within measurable distance of the reinforcements provided by the new army, and that therefore the withdrawal of the two divisions would only make it necessary to bridge over a gap of from three to five weeks during which the reserve would be weakened before they would be replaced. He agreed that this could be accepted, subject to emergencies. I consider, therefore, as the upshot of my conversations, that we should be justified in counting on two divisions being available from the Expeditionary Army from March 15 on, in the absence of emergencies, though it would be most necessary to replace them as soon as possible.

I was very much impressed with the Field-Marshal's great desire to meet the wishes of the Government, even when he could not share our views.

In view of this prospect, at the War Council of February 9 it was decided to offer the 29th Division (which was still in England) to Greece, together with a French division, if she

would join the Allies. I thought that this offer, taken by itself and apart from any effects which might result from the naval attack on the Dardanelles, was wholly inadequate. I did not believe that Greece, and still less Bulgaria, would be influenced by the prospects of such very limited aid. Indeed, the exiguous dimensions of the assistance were in themselves a confession of our weakness. This view was justified, and the offer was promptly declined by M. Venizelos.

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Meanwhile the preparations for the naval attack had been steadily moving forward. All the ships assigned to the task were already on the spot or approaching it. By an informal arrangement with M. Venizelos the island of Lemnos, containing the spacious harbour of Mudros, had been placed at our disposal as a base for the assembling fleet, and two battalions of Marines from the Royal Naval Division had already been despatched thither. The sole object of this small force was to provide landing parties for Admiral Carden's fleet, in case during his operations the opportunity should offer of destroying guns or forts already disabled in parts of the Gallipoli Peninsula where the enemy's resistance had virtually ceased. But once it began to be realised that troops in considerable numbers were becoming available, Sir Henry Jackson and Lord Fisher began to press for their employment in the Dardanelles operation. 'The provision of the necessary military forces,' wrote Sir Henry Jackson on February 15, 'to enable the fruits of this heavy naval undertaking to be gathered must never be lost sight of; the transports carrying them should be in readiness to enter the Straits as soon as it is seen the forts at the Narrows will be silenced. . . . The naval bombardment is not recommended as a sound military operation, unless a strong military force is ready to assist in the operation, or, at least, follow it up immediately the forts are silenced.' There was much mixed thinking in this. The dif-

ference between 'assisting in the operation' and 'following it up immediately the forts are silenced' was fundamental. Fisher on the other hand was perfectly clear. He wanted the Gallipoli Peninsula stormed and held by the Army. This idea neither Lord Kitchener nor the War Council would at this time have entertained.

'I hope you were successful with Kitchener,' wrote the First Sea Lord to me on the evening of February 16, 'in getting divisions sent to Lemnos *to-morrow!* Not a grain of wheat will come from the Black Sea unless there is military occupation of the Dardanelles, and it will be the wonder of the ages that no troops were sent to co-operate with the Fleet with half a million soldiers in England.

'*The war of lost opportunities!!!*' *Why did Antwerp fall?*

'The Haslar boats might go *at once* to Lemnos, as somebody will land at Gallipoli some time or other.'

I still adhered to the integrity of the naval plan. Knowing what I did of the military situation and of the state of our armies, I did not underrate the serious nature of a decision to commit British troops to severe and indefinite fighting with the Turks on the Gallipoli Peninsula. I had of course thought long and earnestly about what would follow if the naval attack succeeded and a British fleet entered the Marmora. I expected that if, and when, the Turkish forts began to fall, the Greeks would join us, and that the whole of their armies would be at our disposal thenceforward. I hoped that the apparition of a British fleet off Constantinople and the flight or destruction of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* would be followed by political reactions of a far-reaching character, as the result of which the Turkish Government would negotiate or withdraw to Asia. I trusted that good diplomacy following hot-foot on a great war event, would induce Bulgaria to march on Adrianople. Lastly, I was sure that Russia, whatever her need elsewhere, would not remain indifferent to the fate of Constantinople and that further reinforcements would be forthcoming from her.

It was on these quasi-political factors that I counted in our own military penury, for the means of exploiting and consolidating any success which might fall to the Fleet. The reader will see how far these speculations appear to have been well founded.

But of course, if after all Lord Kitchener and the War Council saw their way to form a substantial British army in the East, the prospects of a great and successful combination were vastly more hopeful. Such an army assembled in Egypt and the Greek islands might well be the motor muscle which would decide and animate all the rest. It could either seize the Isthmus of Bulair if the Turks evacuated the Peninsula after the Fleet had passed the Straits; or if a Convention was made with Turkey, it could occupy Constantinople promptly. Incidentally, if landing parties on a larger scale were needed during the passage of the Fleet, they could be supplied from this source. Thus a considerable unity was established on the immediate step of sending troops to the East between persons who on the further steps held very different views. Amid the conflicting opinions, competing plans and shifting exigencies of the situation, the desirability of concentrating the largest possible army in the Eastern Mediterranean with extreme promptitude, and placing at its head a supreme general, seemed to all of us at the Admiralty to be obvious. Therefore we at all times, in all discussions, supported everything that would promote and expedite this concentration.

February 16 was a Day of Resolve. At a meeting of the principal Ministers on the War Council, including the Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener and myself, the following decisions, eventually incorporated in the Decisions of the War Council, were taken:—

(1) The 29th Division to be despatched to Lemnos at the earliest possible date, preferably within nine or ten days.

(2) Arrangements to be made to send a force from Egypt, if required.

(3) The whole of the above forces, with the Royal Marine battalions already despatched, to be available in case of necessity to support the naval attack on the Dardanelles.

(4) Horse-boats to be taken out with the 29th Division, and the Admiralty to make arrangements to collect small craft, tugs and lighters in the Levant.[1]

The decision of February 16 is the foundation of the military attack upon the Dardanelles. 'It had not,' say the Dardanelles Commissioners, 'been definitely decided to use troops on a large scale, but they were to be massed so as to be in readiness should their assistance be required.' On this day Admiral Carden was informed that Mudros harbour could be used by him as a base, and Rear-Admiral Wemyss was appointed as senior naval officer there. In the evening of the 16th in pursuance of the decisions which had been taken, I directed Admiral Oliver, Chief of the War Staff, to have transports collected with the utmost speed for the 29th Division, and he issued orders to this effect on the same day. The resolve to concentrate an army undoubtedly carried with it acceptance of the possibility of using it in certain eventualities. But these were not as yet defined.

During the 17th it appeared that great pressure was being put upon Lord Kitchener from General Headquarters not to divert the 29th Division from France. In fact, as has been justly observed by the Official Naval Historian, the use of the 29th Division became a cardinal issue between what were beginning to be called in our secret circles 'The Western' and 'The Eastern' policies. Lord Kitchener became the prey of

[1] A fifth decision authorised the Admiralty to build special transports and lighters suitable for the conveyance and landing of a force of 50,000 men. The Dardanelles Commissioners assumed that this was connected with the Dardanelles enterprise. In fact, however, it was simply a part of the preparations which we were making in case amphibious operations in Northern waters should become possible at a much later date. None of the vessels in question could conceivably be ready in time for the first attack on the Dardanelles.

these contending opinions and forces, and he was plunged into a state of most painful indecision between them.

So far, not a shot had been fired at the Dardanelles, but we were on the eve of the attack on the outer forts. When we met in Council again on the 19th, it became clear that Lord Kitchener had changed his mind. He informed us that he could not consent to the despatch of the 29th Division to the East. He gave as his reason the dangerous weakness of Russia and his fear lest large masses of German troops should be brought back from the Russian front to attack our troops in France. I cannot believe that this argument had really weighed with him. He must have known that, apart from all other improbabilities, it was physically impossible for the Germans to transport great armies from Russia to the French front under two or three months at the very least, and that the 29th Division—one single division—could not affect the issue appreciably if they did so. He used the argument to fortify a decision which he had arrived at after a most painful heart-searching on other and general grounds.

The Council bowed to Lord Kitchener's will, though its wishes and opinions were unaltered. It was decided to postpone the departure of the 29th Division, but the Admiralty was instructed nevertheless to continue the preparation of transports for it and other troops. On the 20th I minuted to the Director of Transports: 'All preparations are to be made to embark the 29th Division with the least possible delay. The despatch of this division is not, however, finally decided.'

The 20th was a day of Recoil. Lord Kitchener had refused to send the 29th Division. He even seemed opposed to any large concentration of troops in the East. 'The French,' he wrote to me (February 20), 'are in a great way about so many troops being employed as you told them of. I have just seen Grey and hope we shall not be saddled with a French contingent for the Dardanelles.' He deprecated my gathering transports at Alexandria for 40,000 men as a precautionary measure,

to which he had previously assented. He went further. He sent his Aide-de-Camp, the brave and accomplished Colonel Fitzgerald, over to the First Sea Lord and the Admiralty Transport Department to say that the 29th Division was not to go. The First Sea Lord and the Director of Naval Transport thereupon assumed that the question had been finally settled by agreement between Lord Kitchener and me. The orders for the collection and fitting of the transports for this Division, which had been operative since the 16th, were accordingly cancelled, and the whole fleet of twenty-two vessels was released for other duties and dispersed without my being informed.

The discussion was resumed on February 24 and 26, but we now met under the impression of the actual attack on the Dardanelles. The bombardment of the Outer Forts had begun on February 19, and although the operations had been interrupted by bad weather a favourable impression had been sustained. Moreover, open action had now been taken. If the 16th had been a day of Resolve, and the 20th a day of Recoil, the 24th and 26th were days of Compromise and Half-measures. On the 24th Lord Kitchener said that he 'felt that if the Fleet could not get through the Straits unaided the Army ought to see the business through. The effect of a defeat in the Orient would be very serious. There could be no going back.' Thus, at a stroke, the idea of discarding the naval attack, if it proved too difficult, and turning to some other objective, was abandoned and the possibility of a great military enterprise seemed to be accepted. On this I again argued strenuously, both on the 24th and on the 26th, for the despatch of the 29th Division, and I used to the full the hopes and interest which the naval attack was increasingly exciting.

Lord Kitchener notwithstanding his pronouncement adhered to his refusal. He had sent General Birdwood, an officer whom he knew well, and in whom he rightly had confidence, from Egypt (where he was commanding the Australasian Army

Corps) to the Dardanelles to report on the prospects and possibilities of military action. On February 24, the War Office requested the Admiralty to send the following telegram, which was drafted by Sir Henry Jackson, to Admiral Carden:—

'. . . The War Office consider the occupation of the Southern end of the peninsula to the line Suandere-Chana Ovasi as not an obligatory operation for ensuring success of the first main object which is to destroy the permanent batteries. Though troops should always be held in readiness to assist in minor operations on both sides of the Straits in order to destroy masked batteries and engage the enemy forces covering them, our main army can remain in camp at Lemnos till the passage of the Straits is in our hands, when holding Bulair lines may be necessary to stop all supplies reaching the peninsula. You should discuss this operation with General Birdwood on his arrival before deciding any major operations beyond covering range of ships' guns and report conclusions arrived at.' Yet two days later, on February 26, Lord Kitchener authorised General Birdwood to draw upon the Australasian Army Corps 'up to the total limit of its strength' for the purpose of aiding the Fleet.

All these half-measures, which nevertheless were assuming serious proportions and marked a change in the whole character of the operation, appeared so perilous to me that at the Council on the 26th I formally disclaimed responsibility for the consequences of any military operations that might arise. My disclaimer was entered in the records. Then the Prime Minister, making a rare intervention, appealed most strongly to Lord Kitchener not to allow the force available in the East to be deprived of the one Regular Division so necessary to its effective composition. It was useless. After the Council I waited behind. I knew the Prime Minister agreed with me, and indeed the whole Council, with the exception of Lord Kitchener, were of one mind. I urged the Prime Minister to make his authority effective and to insist upon the despatch

of the 29th Division to Lemnos or Alexandria. I felt at that moment in an intense way a foreboding of disaster. I knew it was a turning-point in the struggle, as surely as I know, now that the consequences are graven on the monuments of history. The Prime Minister did not feel that anything more could be done. He had done his best to persuade Lord Kitchener. He could not overrule him or face his resignation upon a question like this, for the whole military opinion of the General Staff and of the French authorities would be upon his side.

On February 25 I had prepared an appreciation of the general situation and I had used this to argue from in the War Council of the 26th. It was now printed and circulated to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Balfour. I reprint it now as it explains my position more clearly than any other document of this period.

Appreciation.

1. *Russia.*—We must not expect Russia to invade Germany successfully for many months to come. But though the Russian offensive is paralysed, we may count on her not only maintaining a successful defensive, but effectively containing and retaining very large German forces on her front. There is no reason to believe that Germany will be able to transfer to the West anything like 1,000,000 men at any time; nor anyhow that German forces large enough to influence the situation can arrive in the West before the middle of April.

2. The Anglo-French lines in the West are very strong, and cannot be turned. Our position and forces in France are incomparably stronger than at the beginning of the war, when we had opposed to us nearly three-fourths of the first line of the German Army. We ought to welcome a German assault on the largest possible scale. The chances of repulsing it would be strong in our favour; and even if its success necessitated retirement to another line, the superior losses of the Germans would afford good compensation. The issue in the West in the next three months ought not to cause anxiety. But, anyhow, it is not an issue which could be decisively affected by four or five British divisions.

3. For us the decisive point, and the only point where the initiative can be seized and maintained, is in the Balkan Peninsula. With proper military and naval co-operation, and with forces which are available, we can make certain of taking Constantinople by the end of March, and capturing or destroying all Turkish forces in Europe (except those in Adrianople). This blow can be struck before the fate of Serbia is decided. Its effect on the whole of the Balkans will be decisive. It will eliminate Turkey as a military factor.

4. The following military forces (at least) are available immediately:—

		Men.
In England	29th Division Another Territorial Division	36,000
Under orders for Lemnos: R.N. Division		12,000
From Egypt: 2 Australian Divisions		39,000
French Division	(say)	20,000
Russian Brigade	(say)	8,000
Total		115,000

5. All these troops are capable of being concentrated within striking distance of the Bulair Isthmus by March 21 if orders are given now. If the naval operations have not succeeded by then, they can be used to attack the Gallipoli Peninsula and make sure that the fleet gets through. As soon as the Dardanelles are open, they can either (*a*) operate from Constantinople to extirpate any Turkish forces in Europe; or (*b*) if Bulgaria comes in at our invitation to occupy up to the Enos-Midia line, they can proceed through Bulgaria to the aid of Serbia; or (*c*) if Bulgaria is merely confirmed in a friendly neutrality, but Greece comes in, they can proceed through Salonika to the aid of Serbia.

W. S. C.

February 25, 1915.

And on the 27th:—

I must now put on record my opinion that the military force provided, viz., two Australasian divisions supported by the nine naval battalions and the French division, is not large enough for the work it may have to do; and that the absence

of any British regular troops will, if fighting occurs, expose the naval battalions and the Australians to undue risk.

Even if the Navy succeed unaided in forcing the passage, the weakness of the military force may compel us to forego a large part of the advantages which would otherwise follow.

I still hoped after the meeting of the 26th that in a day or two Lord Kitchener's mood would change, that the Prime Minister would manage to bring him round to the general view, and that the 29th Division would be allowed to start. The War Council, while deferring to his decision, had decided that the transports were still to be held together in readiness for it. After the meeting of the 26th was over I enquired from the Transport Department as to what exact state of preparation the transports were in, expecting to find that they were ready. I then learned that on the 20th they had been countermanded and were now utterly dispersed. I was staggered at this, and wrote at once to Lord Kitchener in protest.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Kitchener.

February 27, 1915.

The War Council on the 19th instructed me to prepare transport *inter alia* for the 29th Division, and I gave directions accordingly. I now learn that on the 20th you sent Colonel Fitzgerald to the Director of Transport with a message that the 29th Division was not to go, and acting on this the transports were countermanded without my being informed. It is easy to see that grave inconvenience might have resulted from this if it had been decided at Friday's Council to send this division at once.

I have now renewed the order for the preparation of the transports, but I apprehend that they cannot be ready for nearly a fortnight. It now seems very likely that the passage of the Dardanelles will be completed before the end of March, and perhaps a good deal earlier.

May I ask also to be informed of any instructions given to the French Division. I understand that the War Office do not wish them to come to Lemnos. The absence of any British regulars seems to make the presence of the French

specially necessary, and I trust they may not be prevented from coming until at any rate the matter can be discussed in Cabinet.

I immediately renewed the orders to the Transport Department, but it was not found possible to reassemble and fit the necessary vessels before March 16.

The actual opening of the bombardment and the success of the Navy at the outer forts, which will be described in the next chapter, induced a further change of view. 'Another meeting of the War Council,' to quote the report of the Dardanelles Commission, 'was held on March 3. By this time Lord Kitchener's opposition to the despatch of the 29th Division had apparently weakened. On the question being raised by Mr. Churchill he said that 'he proposed to leave the question open until March 10, when he hoped to have heard from General Birdwood. General Birdwood, however, arrived at the Dardanelles before the 10th. On the 5th he telegraphed to Lord Kitchener: 'I am very doubtful if the Navy can force the passage unassisted.' . . .

This was followed on the 6th by a telegram to the following effect: 'I have already informed you that I consider the Admiral's forecast is too sanguine, and though we may have a better estimate by March 12, I doubt his ability to force the passage unaided.' On March 10, Lord Kitchener, being then somewhat reassured as regards the position in other theatres of war, and being also possibly impressed by General Birdwood's reports, announced to the War Council that 'he felt that the situation was now sufficiently secure to justify the despatch of the 29th Division.'

'. . . The decision of February 16, the execution of which had been suspended on the 20th, again became operative on March 10. In the meanwhile, three weeks of valuable time had been lost. The transports, which might have left on February 22, did not get away till March 16.'

We shall soon be forced to face the consequences of this delay. The repeated changes of plan were baffling in the last degree. But even after decision was at last taken to send an army including the 29th Division, the use to which that army was to be put remained a Secret of the Sphinx. When Lord Kitchener had decided in his heart that if the Navy failed to force the Dardanelles, he would storm the Gallipoli Peninsula, he ought to have declared it to his colleagues. Failing this he should at any rate have so moved and organised his troops as to leave the different alternatives of action open to him. Most of all should he have set his General Staff to work out plans for the various contingencies which were now plainly coming into view. It would have committed him to nothing to have had the military problem studied scientifically, or to choose a commander in good time.

'From the time the decision of February 16 was taken,' say the Dardanelles Commissioners, 'there were really only two alternatives which were thoroughly defensible. One was to accept the view that by reason of our existing commitments elsewhere an adequate force could not be made available for expeditionary action in the Eastern Mediterranean; to face the possible loss of prestige which would have been involved in an acknowledgment of partial failure, and to have fallen back on the original plan of abandoning the naval attack on the Dardanelles, when once it became apparent that military operations on a large scale would be necessary. The other was to have boldly faced the risks which would have been involved elsewhere and at once to have made a determined effort to force the passage of the Dardanelles by a rapid and well-organised combined attack in great strength. Unfortunately, the Government adopted neither of these courses. . . . We think that Mr. Churchill was quite justified in attaching the utmost importance to the delays which occurred in despatching the 29th Division and the Territorial Division from this country.'

CHAPTER IX

FALL OF THE OUTER FORTS AND THE SECOND GREEK OFFER

February 19: The Outer Forts and Their Armament—The Bombardment Begins—Operations of February 19 and 25—The Outer Forts Destroyed: Landing of Marines—Successful Conclusion of the First Phase—Increasing Prospects of Military Aid—My Letter of March 4—Absence of Military Staff Work—Lord Kitchener Accepts Responsibility—Consequences Throughout Europe of the Attack on the Dardanelles—The Russian Claim to Constantinople—The Conservative Leaders Invited to Conference—Effects of Dardanelles Upon Bulgaria, Roumania, Italy and Greece—Hopes of Italian Intervention—March 1: The Second Greek Offer—Disastrous Character of the Russian Action—King Constantine Rebuffed—Resignation of M. Venizelos—The Lost Opportunity.

AT nine minutes to ten on the morning of February 19 the British and French fleets concentrated at the Dardanelles began the bombardment of the outer forts.[1] These forts were four in number and mounted nineteen primary guns.[2] Of these all but four were old pattern short guns with a maximum range of 6,000 to 8,000 yards. Only the two pairs of 9·4-inch guns in the two smaller forts could fire above 11,000 yards.

[1] The map facing page 240 will be found relevant to this chapter. The general map of the Turkish theatre at the end of Chapter XXIV will also be useful.

[2] *On the European side:*

(No. 3.) Sedd-el-Bahr. Six 9·4 to 11-inch guns.
(No. 1.) Cape Helles. Two 9·4-inch guns.

On the Asiatic side:

(No. 6.) Kum Kale. Six 9·4 to 11-inch guns.
One 8-inch gun.
Two 6-inch guns.
(No. 4.) Orkanie. Two 9·4-inch guns.
Total: Nineteen primary guns.

The whole of these defences therefore were exposed to bombardment from the ships at ranges to which they could make no effective reply.

The attacking fleet was formed into three divisions:—

1st Division.	2d Division.	3d Division.
Inflexible	*Vengeance*	*Suffren*
Agamemnon	*Albion*	*Bouvet*
Queen Elizabeth	*Cornwallis*	*Charlemagne*
	Irresistible	*Gaulois*
	Triumph	

These vessels mounted 178 guns of 5½-inch and upward, for the most part more modern than those in the forts, heavier and capable of outranging them in every class of gun. The operations which ensued are minutely described in the Official Naval History, the manœuvres of every ship and the results of almost every shot being carefully set out. It is not intended to repeat this here.

The attack was to have been divided into two parts: first, a long-range bombardment, and, second, overwhelming the forts at short range and sweeping a channel towards the entrance of the Straits. Ammunition was sparingly used and at first the ships were kept under way. It soon became evident that the moving ships could not achieve sufficient accuracy of fire, and at 10.30 all were ordered to anchor in positions outside the enemy's range which enabled one ship to observe from a different angle the fire of another. By 2 o'clock it was considered that the effect of the slow long-range bombardment was sufficient to enable the closer attack to be made, and the bombarding vessels closed to about 6,000 yards. Up till this time no fort had replied to the fire. But at 4.45 p.m., on the *Suffren*, *Vengeance* and *Cornwallis* advancing to within 5,000 yards' range, the two smaller forts with their modern guns came into action, showing that their guns had not been damaged by the long-range firing. The *Vengeance* and *Cornwallis*, rein-

forced by the *Agememnon*, *Inflexible* and *Gaulois*, returned the fire, temporarily silencing one of the forts. Rear-Admiral de Robeck, the second in command, whose flag was flying in the *Vengeance*, wished to continue the action at close range, but as it was now nearly half-past five and the light was fading, the Commander-in-Chief signalled a 'General Recall,' and the day's operations came to a close. Only 139 12-inch shells had been fired by the fleet. The results of this inconclusive bombardment seemed to show, first, that it was necessary for ships to anchor before accurate shooting could be made; secondly, that direct fire was better than indirect fire; and, thirdly, that it was not sufficient to hit the forts with the naval shells—actual hits must be made on the guns or their mountings. This last fact was important.

The next day the weather broke and no operations were possible for five days. On the 25th the bombardment was resumed in the light of the experience gained. The *Agamemnon* fired at Fort Helles, the *Queen Elizabeth* at Sedd-el-Bahr and later at Fort Helles, the *Irresistible* at Orkanie and the *Gaulois* at Kum Kale. All these ships and others reciprocally observed and checked each other's fire. The forts replied, but without much success. The effect of the bombardment was remarkable. It proved conclusively the great accuracy of naval fire, provided good observation could be obtained. After eighteen rounds the *Queen Elizabeth* hit directly and disabled both the modern guns in Fort Helles. With an expenditure of thirty-five rounds the *Irresistible* destroyed both the modern guns in Orkanie, one early and one late in the day. Thus all four long-range guns defending the mouth of the Straits were individually disabled or destroyed for a very moderate expenditure of ammunition. In the afternoon the ships advanced to within close range of the forts and brought a heavy fire to bear on all of them. All the forts were silenced. The older forts with their short-range armament were considered by the Turks mere shell traps and their garrisons were withdrawn from them. After

the Armistice the Turks stated that the batteries and ammunition dumps were all destroyed, but none of the magazines touched. The forts were evacuated because the short-range fire of the fleet had destroyed them entirely. The loss of life on both sides was small. Practically no damage was done to the fleet, although the *Agamemnon* was hit six or seven times. In all only three men were killed and seven wounded.

It will be seen that this was a very important and satisfactory day. Only thirty-one 15-inch shells had been fired in all, besides eighty-one British 12-inch and fifty from the corresponding French guns. The bombardment clearly proved the power of the ships anchored at about 12,000 yards, if good observation at right angles to the range was available, to destroy the Turkish guns without undue expenditure of ammunition. It was now possible to sweep the approaches and the entrance to the Straits, which was done on the evening of the 25th and the 26th. Three Battleships entered the Straits and completed the ruin of the Outer Forts from inside. A still more remarkable and, as we thought at the time, more hopeful development followed. On the 26th and following days, covered by the guns of the fleet, demolition parties of 50 to 100 sailors and marines were landed, who blew to pieces with gun-cotton all the guns in Sedd-el-Bahr, as well as in the two forts on the Asiatic side. They were not seriously opposed by the Turks. In all forty-eight guns were destroyed or found in a disabled condition by the landing parties, only nine men being killed and wounded.[1]

Thus by March 2 the whole of the outer defences of the Dardanelles were destroyed, including nineteen primary guns, of which four were modern. These constituted approximately

[1] Of the ten heavy guns in Sedd-el-Bahr only three had been destroyed by the bombardment. Of the ten guns in Kum Kale seven were apparently found undamaged. Fort Orkanie was also entered and both guns were found disabled. Six modern howitzers on the cliff to the east of Sedd-el-Bahr and a number of smaller guns were also destroyed.

in number and in quality one-fifth of the whole of the gun defences of the Straits. The fleet was now able to sweep and enter the Straits for a distance of six miles up to the limit of the Kephez minefield. The first phase of the Dardanelles operations was thus completed.

The greatest satisfaction was expressed at the Admiralty, and I found myself in these days surrounded by smiling faces. Lord Kitchener told me that his officers who were in contact with the Admiralty reported a spirit of strong confidence. If the Dardanelles Commissioners could only have taken the expert evidence on the feasibility of ships attacking forts in the first week of March, 1915, instead of in the spring of 1917, they would have been impressed by the robust character of naval opinion on these questions. They would also have been struck by the number of persons who were in favour of the Dardanelles operations and claimed to have contributed to their initiation. In short, their task would have resembled the labours of the Royal Commission which enquired into the origin of the Tanks.

Each day at the meetings of the Admiralty War Group I invited Sir Henry Jackson to give his appreciation of the telegrams from the fleet. These appreciations were up to this point highly encouraging. I telegraphed to Admiral Carden at the end of February asking how many fine days he estimated he would require to get through. He replied on March 2: 'Fourteen.' It really looked as if we had found a way in which the Navy could help the allied cause in a new and most important direction. However, I observe that I informed the War Council on February 26 that 'the Admiralty could not guarantee success and that the main difficulty would be encountered at the Narrows. All that could be said was that the reduction of the Outer Forts gave a good augury for success.' I also pointed out repeatedly that a purely naval operation would not in itself make the Straits free for unarmoured merchant ships.

The Inner and Intermediate Defences of the Dardanelles were now exposed to the attack of the fleet. These defences consisted of ten forts and batteries of varying size and importance equally disposed on the European and Asiatic shores; of the minefields closing the Straits in successive lines; and of the mobile batteries and howitzers which protected both the forts and the minefields. To this problem the Fleet now addressed itself.

* * * * *

From February 24 onward I could contemplate that Lord Kitchener would in certain circumstances be willing to use an army not merely to exploit a victory of the Fleet, but actually if need be to contribute to it on a large scale. All else was uncertain. What he would do, when and how he would do it, remained impenetrable. But the timely concentration of whatever forces were available was urgent. I did my best to see that this at least should not break down, and I used the success of the Fleet at the outer forts as a spur.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Kitchener.

March 4, 1915.

I have now heard from Carden that he considers it will take him fourteen days on which firing is practicable to enter the Sea of Marmora, counting from the 2nd of March. Of course bad weather would prolong, and a collapse of the Turkish resistance at the later forts would shorten this period. But it seems to me we ought now to fix a date for the military concentration, so that the arrival of troops can be timed to fit in with the normal fruition of the naval operation. The transports for the 30,000 troops from Egypt, less those already taken to Lemnos, will all have arrived at Alexandria between the 8th and the 15th, that is to say, the troops could be landed at Bulair, or, alternatively, if practicable, taken through the Straits to Constantinople, about the 18th instant. By the same time the transports conveying the 8,000 men of the Naval

Division from England could also reach the same points. In addition there are, I understand, in Lemnos 4,000 Australians and 2,000 Marines of the Royal Naval Division. Therefore I suggest for your consideration, and for the proper co-ordination of naval and military policy, that we fix in our own minds the 20th March as the date on which 40,000 British troops will certainly be available for land operations on Turkish soil. To make sure of this date it will perhaps be better to give all orders as for the 17th or 18th; we should then have a little in hand. I think the French should be given this date [20th] as their point, and should rendezvous at Lemnos not later than the 16th. We should also inform the Russians and the Greeks, and ask them what dates they can work to (assuming they are coming). It is necessary for me to know what your views and plans are in these matters.

I feel it my duty also to represent the strong feeling we have at the Admiralty that there should be placed at the head of this army so variously composed, a general officer of high rank and reputation, who has held important commands in war. I heard yesterday with very great pleasure you mention the name of Sir Ian Hamilton as the officer you had designated for the main command in this theatre. Certainly no choice could be more agreeable to the Admiralty and to the Navy, but I would venture to press upon you the desirability of this officer being on the spot as soon as possible, in order that he may concert with the Admiral the really critical and decisive operations which may be required at the very outset.

I wish to make it clear that the naval operations in the Dardanelles cannot be delayed for troop movements, as we must get into the Marmora as soon as possible in the normal course.

With regard to other British troops which it is understood you are holding in reserve, but about which no final decision has been taken, transport will be ready on the 15th for either the 29th Division or for the Yeomanry Division. It is not necessary for you to decide until about the 10th instant which you will send, and no doubt by then you will have heard from Birdwood. The need of one good division of regular infantry in an army composed of so many different elements, and containing only British and Australian troops raised since the war, still appears to me to be grave and urgent.

I sent a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey, with the following covering note: 'These military movements must now be properly concerted.'

Lord Fisher was very much pleased by these developments. He would of course have welcomed the whole enterprise being converted at the first opportunity into a joint operation. The increasing possibilities of extensive military action made me anxious about the conditions which prevailed in the War Office. I knew that practically no military staff work was being done. The various contingencies possible were not being studied in detail. Numbers, dates, supplies and the organisation appropriate to the various forms of action which might be required, were in the most vague condition, in so far as they were not carried in the comprehensive mind of the Secretary of State for War himself. He was in constant communication with General Birdwood at the Dardanelles. But he did not allow the General Staff nor the Quartermaster-General to meddle in the business at all at this stage, nor give them any inkling of the grave decisions which in certain circumstances he might wish to take, and which were evidently forming in his mind. Seeing all this I became increasingly apprehensive in the first week of March lest a military breakdown should occur. I was determined not to be involved in responsibility for action far more momentous than any which the Admiralty was taking, but over which I had absolutely no control. I therefore early in March asked the Prime Minister to arrange an interview between me and Lord Kitchener in his presence. I then asked Lord Kitchener formally and pointedly whether he assumed responsibility for any military operations that might arise, and in particular for the measure of the forces required to achieve success. He replied at once that he certainly did so, and the Admiralty thereupon transferred on March 12 the Royal Naval Division to his command.

On March 10 the 29th Division was ordered to Lemnos, and on March 16 the earliest of its transports sailed. The War

Office, however, did not embark it in the ships in any order or organisation to fight on arrival at its destination.

* * * * *

The success of the naval attack upon the outer forts of the Dardanelles and the first penetration of the Straits produced reactions of high consequence throughout Europe, and their repercussion was apparent all over the world. 'The Turkish Headquarters at the end of February,' writes General Liman von Sanders, then the head of the German Military Mission, 'expected the success of a break through by the hostile Fleet. Arrangements were made for the Sultan, the Court and Treasury to take refuge in the interior of Asia Minor.'[1] Far away on the Chicago Stock Exchange wheat prices fell with suddenness.

In Europe, Russia asked for a public declaration about Constantinople. At the outset of the war the attitude of Russia had been perfectly correct. She had joined with England and France in assuring Turkey that the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire would be respected at the peace. But once Turkey, rejecting this fair offer, had taken sides against her, the Russian attitude changed. 'The Turkish aggression,' writes Monsieur Paléologue, the French Ambassador in Petrograd, November 9, 1914, 'has resounded to the depths of the Russian conscience. . . . All the romantic Utopias of Slavism have suddenly awakened.'[2] The supreme need of encouraging Russia in the midst of her disasters and defeats led Sir Edward Grey, as early as November 14, 1914, to instruct Sir George Buchanan to inform M. Sazonoff that the British Government recognised that 'the question of the Straits and of Constantinople should be settled in conformity with Russian desires.' At the time this had remained a complete secret. But now in 1915 that there seemed to be a pros-

[1] 'Five Years in Turkey,' by Liman von Sanders, p. 72.
[2] 'La Russie des Tsars,' Maurice Paléologue, vol. 1, p. 187.

pect of Constantinople falling into the hands of the Allies, Russian opinion required public reassurance. Such an announcement was bound to cause unfavourable reactions in Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania. Could we, on the other hand, afford to quarrel with or even dishearten Russia at the moment when she was reeling under the German cannonade, but was nevertheless contending manfully and was all the time vital to our hopes of general victory? So important was the decision judged, that at the beginning of March the Prime Minister invited the leaders of the Conservative Party, Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law, to attend our Council on the subject. I was glad of this development and strongly advised it. I had long wanted to see a National Coalition formed. I viewed with great disquiet the spectacle of this powerful Conservative Party—almost all-powerful it had become since Liberal politics were shattered for the time by the outbreak of the struggle—brooding morosely outside, with excellent information from the Services and complete detachment from all responsibility for the terrible business which had to go forward from day to day. We needed their aid. The Empire needed their aid. We wanted all their able men in positions of high and active authority. I had frequently talked to Mr. Asquith in this sense in the early months of the war, and I now pointed out that this moment, when some fruition and promise of success had come to us in the East, was of all others the time when the necessary fusion and coalition could be effected on terms honourable to both great parties. The Prime Minister was far from being unconscious of this aspect, or of the political instability which the situation would present should the general state of the war take a turn for the worse, as seemed very likely. I hoped that this first meeting with the official chiefs of the Opposition—Mr. Balfour being already in our councils—might lead to rapid developments in the direction of our national unity and cohesion. The two Conservative leaders, however, showed plainly by their manner that they

did not care to become responsible for a fraction only of the policy of the State and were chary of committing themselves in regard to a single incident. This was natural, but the results were unfortunate. The Council did not march satisfactorily, although a united decision was reached. And on the whole. as the result, a chilling impression of domestic politics was, I think, sustained by the Prime Minister.

In the early days of March both Great Britain and France apprised the Russian Government that they would agree to the annexation of Constantinople by Russia as a part of a victorious peace; and this momentous fact was accordingly made public on the 12th.

In the Balkans the effect of the naval operations was electrical. The attitude of Bulgaria changed with lightning swiftness. Within a fortnight our Intelligence Reports showed that the Turks were being forced to move back to Adrianople and develop their front against Bulgaria. General Paget, the head of a special Mission then at Sofia, telegraphed to Lord Kitchener on March 17 that after an audience with the King he was convinced that 'the operations in the Dardanelles have made a deep impression, that all possibility of Bulgaria attacking any Balkan State that might side with the Entente is now over, and there is some reason to think that shortly the Bulgarian Army will move against Turkey to co-operate in the Dardanelles operations.' The attitude of Roumania also became one of extreme and friendly vigilance. Russia, although she had not previously been able to spare more than 1,000 Cossacks for action in the Balkans, now offered the fullest naval co-operation, and began to concentrate an army corps under General Istomine at Batoum to participate in what was believed to be the impending fall of Constantinople.

On March 2 our Minister at Bucharest telegraphed that the Roumanian Prime Minister had said that his conviction that Italy 'would move soon' had become stronger. 'My Russian colleague has twice seen the Italian Minister and while the

latter had often before spoken to him about . . . Italy . . . joining us in the war, his language on the last two occasions was more precise than ever before and was indeed almost pressing. He spoke of acquisitions on the Adriatic coast, *and a share in the eventual partition of Turkey*. . . . Italy would have in a month's time an army of 1,800,000 men ready to move. . . .' Other similar indications flowed in. On March 5 I minuted to Sir Edward Grey: 'The attitude of Italy is remarkable. If she can be induced to join with us, the Austrian Fleet would be powerless and the Mediterranean as safe as an English lake. Surely some effort should be made to encourage Italy to come forward. From leaving an alliance to declaring war is only a step.' The Foreign Secretary replied in writing, 'I will neglect no opportunity.'

Most important of all were the effects upon Greece. We have seen how on February 11 M. Venizelos, in spite of his friendship for the Allies and his deep desire to join them, had refused to be drawn into the war by the futile offer of a British and French division. But the attack on the Dardanelles produced an immediate change. On March 1 the British Minister in Athens telegraphed that M. Venizelos had put forward a proposal that a Greek army corps of three divisions should be sent to Gallipoli. Sir Edward Grey promptly replied that H.M. Government would gladly accept this aid, and added that the Admiralty were very anxious that the Greeks should assist with ships as well as troops in the Dardanelles. The British Minister replied on March 2: 'M. Venizelos hopes to be in a position to make us a definite offer to-morrow. . . . He had already approached the King, who,' added the Minister, 'I learn from another source, is in favour of war.'

On the 3d the British Military Attaché at Athens telegraphed that 'The view of the Greek General Staff was universally that the naval attack should be assisted by land operations. Their plan was to disembark four or five Greek

divisions at the Southern extremity of the Peninsula and to advance against the heights East of Maidos. Three successive defended positions would have to be carried, but Turks could not develop large forces owing to lack of space for deployment. If simultaneously an attack by a separate and sufficient force was made against lines of Bulair, either by disembarking troops North of [the] lines or at head of Gulf of Xeros, the Turks would have to abandon the Maidos region or run risk of being cut off.'

Thus at this moment we had within our reach or on the way not only the Australasian Army corps and all the other troops in Egypt, the Royal Naval Division, and a French Division, we had also at least a Greek army corps of three divisions and possibly more, while a Russian army corps was assembling at Batoum. It would have been quite easy, in addition, to have sent the 29th Division and one or two Territorial divisions from England. There was surely a reasonable prospect that with all these forces playing their respective parts in a general scheme, the Gallipoli Peninsula could even now have been seized and Constantinople taken before the end of April. Behind all lay Bulgaria and Roumania, determined not to be left out of the fall of Constantinople and the collapse of the Turkish Empire. One step more, one effort more—and Constantinople was in our hands and all the Balkan States committed to irrevocable hostility to the Central Powers. One must pause, and with the tragic knowledge of after days dwell upon this astounding situation which had been produced swiftly, easily, surely, by a comparatively small naval enterprise directed at a vital nerve-centre of the world.

But now a terrible fatality intervened. Russia—failing, reeling backward under the German hammer, with her munitions running short, cut off from her allies—Russia was the Power which ruptured irretrievably this brilliant and decisive combination. On March 3 the Russian Foreign Minister informed our Ambassador that:—

The Russian Government could not consent to Greece participating in operations in the Dardanelles, as it would be sure to lead to complications. . . .

'The Emperor,' M. Sazonoff added, 'had in an audience with him yesterday declared he could not in any circumstances consent to Greek co-operation in the Dardanelles.' This was a hard saying. Was there no finger to write upon the wall, was there no ancestral spirit to conjure up before this unfortunate Prince, the downfall of his House, the ruin of his people—the bloody cellar of Ekaterinburg?

In Athens the Russian Minister, under orders from his Government, was active to discourage and resist the Greek intervention. In particular, the King of Greece was made aware that in no circumstances would he be allowed to enter Constantinople with his troops. Other suggestions were made, that perhaps one Greek division might be allowed to participate, 'this having the advantage that the King could not take the field in person.' Can one wonder that, with his German consort and German leanings, with every appeal on the one hand and this violent rebuff upon the other, King Constantine was thrown back, and relapsed into his previous attitude of hostile reserve?

Further advices from the French Foreign Office on March 4 stated:—

The Russian Government would not at any price accept the co-operation of Greece in Constantinople expedition.

The French Minister for Foreign Affairs thinks progress of Anglo-French fleet may be such as to [enable it to] appear before Constantinople without necessity of landing troops, except a small body to hold the Bulair lines. There might consequently not be any occasion for military co-operation with Greece. . . . If the Greek Government offer co-operation in the Dardanelles expedition they should be told that co-operation of Greece in the war must be entire and she must give active support to Serbia.

Our Minister at Athens, the well-informed and vigilant Elliot, left us in no doubt of the Greek position.

'To insist on Greek support of Serbia,' he telegraphed on the 6th, 'except in the event of a Bulgarian attack, would be to wreck the prospect of Greek co-operation with us. The Prime Minister himself had been convinced by the arguments of the General Staff as to the strategical danger of such an operation.'

The British Military Attaché telegraphed on the 6th:—

'My Russian colleague told me to-day that he thought Russia would object to presence of King of Greece in Constantinople, and might make a stipulation that he did not come, a condition of acceptance of the present Greek offer. Any such restriction might lead to collapse of the whole proposal. I urged him to represent to Russian General Staff the strategic advantages of the proposal. Entry of Greece into the war would give best guarantee of succouring Serbia if again attacked by Austria, and maintenance of Greek forces intact would have initially a deterrent effect upon Bulgaria, which in turn might set Roumania free to co-operate with Russia in Bukovina. The French would benefit by securing Corfu as a naval base for the Adriatic, and a general movement in favour of the Triple Entente would be set going in the Balkans.

'The King,' he added, 'will not initially accompany force, but when Constantinople is approached he may alter his mind. If so, it is conceivable that the King of the Bulgarians might like to anticipate him by co-operating against the Turkish Army—which might have decisive results.

'Russia's objection to temporary presence of either King would be then most unfortunate.

'M. Venizelos,' he concluded, 'received a great ovation in procession to-day, but main reason for popularity of his proposal to join us, is the hope of Greek troops reaching Constantinople.'

Feeling this situation, as I did, in every nerve of my body, I was acutely distressed. The time-honoured quotation one learnt as a schoolboy—Quos deus vult perdere, prius dementat—resounded in all its deep significance now that conditions as

tragic and fate-laden as those of ancient Rome had again descended upon the world. This was, indeed, the kind of situation for which such terrible sentences had been framed—perhaps it was for this very situation that this sentence had been prophetically reserved.

In my distress I wrote, late on the night of the 6th, to Sir Edward Grey.

Mr. Churchill to Sir Edward Grey.

March 6, 1915.

I beseech you at this crisis not to make a mistake in falling below the level of events. Half-hearted measures will ruin all, and a million men will die through the prolongation of the war. You must be bold and violent. You have a right to be. Our fleet is forcing the Dardanelles. No armies can reach Constantinople but those which we invite, yet we seek nothing here but the victory of the common cause.

Tell the Russians that we will meet them in a generous and sympathetic spirit about Constantinople. But no impediment must be placed in the way of Greek co-operation. We must have Greece and Bulgaria, if they will come. I am so afraid of your losing Greece, and yet paying all the future into Russian hands. If Russia prevents Greece helping, I will do my utmost to oppose her having Constantinople. She is a broken power but for our aid, and has no resource open but to turn traitor—and this she cannot do.

If you don't back up *this* Greece—the Greece of Venizelos—you will have another which will cleave to Germany.

I put this letter aside till the next morning, and in the morning there arrived the following laconic telegram from Athens:—

The King, having refused to agree to M. Venizelos' proposals, the Cabinet have resigned.

I put my letter away unsent, and print it now not in any reproach of Sir Edward Grey or the Foreign Office. They felt as we did. They did all in their power. But I print it because it registers a terrible moment in the long struggle to save Russia from her foes and from herself.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW RESOLVE

The Naval Operations Flag and Falter—Direct and Indirect Bombardment—Fire of the *Queen Elizabeth*—Difficulties of Sweeping the Minefields—Sir Ian Hamilton Appointed Commander-in-Chief—His Instructions from Lord Kitchener—Increasing Desire for Military Action—Its Risks and Hopes—Lord Kitchener's Decision—The Opportunity for Reviewing the Whole Position—A Chance to Break off Before Further Commitment—General Wish for Resolute Action—Admiralty Telegrams to Vice-Admiral Carden—All Preparations for a Serious Attack—Admiral Carden's Illness—Admiral de Robeck Appointed in His Stead—The Eve of March 18.

WHILE the attention of so many States, great and small, was riveted upon the Dardanelles, and while so many profound and far-reaching reactions were occurring over the whole field of the war, the naval operations which had produced these great effects began to falter and to flag. From March 3 onward the progress of Admiral Carden's attack became continually slower. The weather was frequently unsuitable to long-range firing, our seaplanes in those early days were neither numerous nor very efficient, the co-ordination of the gunnery and the observation, though based on sound principles, was in practice primitive through lack of experience. The mobile howitzers which began to fire in larger numbers each day from both sides of the Straits harassed the bombarding ships and forced them to keep on the move. Landing parties sent ashore on March 4 met with much stiffer resistance, and failed to reach the forts. The attempts to sweep up the minefields encountered considerable and increasing Turkish fire from field guns well directed by searchlights. The mine-sweeping trawlers which had been provided for this service proved inadequate for so severe a task. The

ordeal was very trying to their erstwhile civilian personnel who, though familiar with mines, had never previously encountered artillery fire.

Three separate and successive bombardments were made between March 2 and March 8 upon the Turkish forts constituting the inner defences of the Dardanelles.

First, on the 2d and 3d the *Canopus*, *Swiftsure*, *Cornwallis*, *Albion*, *Triumph* and *Prince George* at different times bombarded various forts, Fort Dardanos (8) receiving the main fire. The forts were silenced, but as the ships were kept moving sometimes in circles by the howitzer fire, no guns were hit. Altogether 121 12-inch shells were fired. No definite conclusions could be formed as to the effect of the fire, but the expenditure of ammunition was considered serious.

The method was now changed. On March 5 the *Queen Elizabeth* began the indirect bombardment of the forts at the Narrows. She was stationed outside the Straits two miles from Gaba Tepe and fired across the peninsula. During the day thirty-three 15-inch shells were fired, twenty-eight at Fort 13 and five at Fort 17. Everything depended upon the arrangements for spotting the fall of the shots. This was provided so far as possible by three seaplanes and by three battleships (*Irresistible*, *Canopus* and *Cornwallis*) manœuvring inside the Straits at right angles to the line of fire. Spotting for elevation by the ships was comparatively easy, but they were from their position unable to spot for direction. This depended upon the seaplanes, and for this all-important purpose our seaplane force was found inadequate. The first machine sent up crashed owing to the propeller bursting at 3,000 feet. The second machine was forced to descend after being hit six times by rifle bullets and the pilot wounded. The third machine gave one correction only.

The indirect bombardment was continued on March 6. By this time the Turks had brought up small guns and howitzers on the Gallipoli Peninsula which fired upon the *Queen*

Elizabeth, causing her to increase her range to 20,000 yards. The old Turkish battleship *Barbarossa* also opened fire upon her with her 11-inch guns from inside the Straits off Maidos. None of our ships were damaged, although all were hit on several occasions by the howitzers and field guns.

The results of the firing are now known to be as follows:— Fort 13 was hit eleven times and Fort 17 about seven times. The barracks in rear of both these forts were destroyed and one magazine was hit. No guns were damaged, but the firing coming from an unprotected angle had a disturbing effect on the Turkish guns' crews. Had aeroplane observation been possible, there is little doubt that great damage would have been done to the forts, and with a sufficient expenditure of ammunition every gun might have been smashed. The forts were quite unprotected from this direction, and each gun and mounting presented a maximum target. The instruction contained in the original Admiralty orders about the sparing use of ammunition and the inadequate arrangements for observation from the air led to a premature discontinuance of this form of attack. This was a great pity. The long-range bombardment by the *Queen Elizabeth* was one of the prime features in the naval plan. Good supplies of ammunition were available for the 15-inch guns, but the Admiralty did not give permission to draw upon these till after March 18. The rule about economy therefore stood. It would have been possible in a few weeks to reinforce and improve the aerial spotting, and this was, in fact, done. The principle underlying the use of the *Queen Elizabeth* against the forts, as embodied in the original Admiralty plan, was sound. The failure was due to the restriction on the expenditure of ammunition and to the inadequate aerial observation. Both these were subsequently remedied, but meanwhile the method had itself been precipitately condemned and was never resumed.

The attack by indirect fire being assumed to have failed, direct attacks upon the forts at the Narrows were resumed on

March 7 by the *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson* at ranges of from 12,000 to 13,000 yards. The French squadron also engaged Forts 7 and 8. The day was inconclusive. On the 8th the *Queen Elizabeth*, aided by the *Canopus*, *Cornwallis* and *Irresistible* renewed the attack. The light was bad owing to rain squalls, and low clouds prevented seaplane observation. All the ships came under the usual howitzer fire, which however did them no serious harm. The forts were apparently silenced, but the Turks claim that they were reserving their ammunition for shorter ranges, and that they ceased firing to clear the guns of grit and debris thrown up by the exploded shells in their vicinity.

The operations continued till the 12th with fitful bombardments and tentative attempts to sweep the minefields. During these days I began to doubt whether there was sufficient determination behind the attack. In one of his telegrams, for instance, the Admiral reported that the mine-sweepers had been driven back by heavy fire which, he added, had caused no casualties. Considering what was happening on the Western front and the desperate tasks and fearful losses which were accepted almost daily by the allied troops, I could not but feel disquieted by an observation of this kind. In further telegrams the Admiral explained the difficulties, and that he was reorganising his mine-sweeping service with regular naval personnel. This reorganisation was not, however, complete until a much later period in the operations. Meanwhile, although several further determined attempts were made, happily not attended by heavy losses, the minefields remained substantially intact.

It was clear that a much more vehement effort must be made.

* * * * *

The appointment of a military Commander-in-Chief for the forces assembling in the Eastern Mediterranean and his despatch to the scene of operations was long overdue. By

the end of the first week in March Lord Kitchener had virtually decided to select Sir Ian Hamilton, who was at that time in command of the Central Force at home. He did not, however, reveal his purpose to this officer until the morning of the 12th, when he sent for him and observed laconically: 'We are sending a military force to support the Fleet now at the Dardanelles, and you are to have command.'[1]

Waiting for this decision, delayed without reason day after day, while troops and events were swiftly moving forward, had been very trying to me and to Lord Fisher. The concentration of transports had been timed for the 18th, and a host of intricate and imperious questions connected with the feeding, watering and organisation of large numbers of men and animals were impending at Mudros. The French Division was also on the sea and looking to us for directions and arrangements. All questions of the use of the troops were additional to these administrative problems. On the other hand Lord Kitchener showed himself restive under repeated enquiries, and was prompt to resent anything that looked like pressure or forcing his hand. We were anxious to have whatever troops he would send on the spot as soon as possible, and great tact was necessary. It was not until the 11th that I was sure he had decided upon Sir Ian Hamilton. I immediately ordered a special train for the afternoon of the 12th in case it should be wanted.

Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister.

March 11, 1915, *midnight.*

The First Sea Lord and I attach the greatest importance to Ian Hamilton getting to Lemnos at the earliest possible moment. The naval operations may at any moment become dependent on military assistance. In view of the exertions we are making we think we are entitled to a good military opinion as to the use of whatever forces may be available.

. . . I trust you will be able to represent this to Kitchener. Too much time has been lost already for nothing.

[1] Sir Ian Hamilton: 'Gallipoli Diary,' p. 2.

Lord Kitchener to Mr. Churchill.

March 12, 1915.

Hamilton cannot leave until we have thoroughly studied the situation with which he may be confronted. I hope we will get him off Saturday night. 'More haste less speed.'

Sir Ian Hamilton to Mr. Churchill.

March 12, 1915.

Just back from a three hours' talk at the War Office. Lord K. has decided I start to-morrow at 5 p.m. I fought hard for to-day, but as the first idea was that I must wait a full fortnight, to-morrow is something in gain of time. . . .

I must not in loyalty tell you too much of my War Office conversation, but I see I shall need some courage in stating my opinions, as well as in attacking the enemy; also that the Cabinet will not be quite eye to eye whatever I may have to say.

* * * * *

The following were the salient points from Lord Kitchener's written instructions to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

(1) The Fleet have undertaken to force the passage of the Dardanelles. The employment of military forces on any large scale for land operations at this juncture is only contemplated in the event of the Fleet failing to get through after every effort has been exhausted.

(2) Before any serious undertaking is carried out in the Gallipoli Peninsula, all the British military forces detailed for the expedition should be assembled so that their full weight can be thrown in.

(3) Having entered on the project of forcing the Straits, there can be no idea of abandoning the scheme. It will require time, patience and methodical plans of co-operation between the naval and military commanders. The essential point is to avoid a check which will jeopardise our chances of strategical and political success.

(4) This does not preclude the probability of minor operations being engaged upon to clear areas occupied by the Turks with guns annoying the Fleet or for demolition of forts already silenced by the Fleet. But such minor operations should be

as much as possible restricted to the forces necessary to achieve the object in view, and should as far as practicable not entail permanent occupation of positions on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Whatever military criticisms may be levelled at these instructions, they represented fairly all that had been settled by the War Council up to that moment. With these instructions in his pocket, and accompanied by a small group of Staff officers appointed during the preceding day, and now meeting for the first time, Sir Ian Hamilton left Charing Cross for the Dardanelles on the evening of March 13. The thirty-knot light Cruiser, *Phaeton*, awaited him under steam at Marseilles and carried him at full speed to the Dardanelles by the morning of the 17th.[1]

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[1] Brigadier-General Cecil Aspinall has written an account of his personal experiences in connection with the organisation of the troops to accompany Sir Ian Hamilton, which throws an interesting sidelight on the conditions which prevailed in the War Office at this time:—

'It was on March 11 that we were first told that Sir Ian Hamilton was going at once to the Dardanelles with four divisions. My particular task was to work out special war establishments for Sir Ian's Headquarters, and for the land transport, supply columns, etc., of the force, but no one could tell me whether the roads in the Gallipoli Peninsula were fit for mechanical transport or whether there were any roads at all. As regards Sir Ian's Headquarters, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir James Wolfe Murray) told me that Lord Kitchener had given definite orders that it was not to include more than about three staff officers. It was vain to suggest that for the headquarters of a force of four divisions this was quite inadequate, and that Sir Ian would require at least seven times that number. General Wolfe Murray replied wearily that it was Lord Kitchener's order and that he could not ask him to change it. Argument proving futile, I went back to my room and drew up an establishment for twenty-three officers, the smallest number that Sir Ian could carry on with. This was duly sanctioned by the necessary "K" in blue pencil the following morning, the S. of S. naturally refusing to argue about so small a matter.

'On March 12, while still immersed in transport tables and calculations, I was suddenly told that the work must be finished next day as I was myself to go out with Sir Ian Hamilton the following afternoon. By dint of sitting up all night the work was completed by 3 p.m., and

The increasing perplexities of the naval attack and the surprising ease with which the small parties of Marines had been landed at the end of February upon the Peninsula made the immediate employment of troops very tempting both at the Admiralty and on the spot. On March 11 Sir Henry Jackson sent the following Minute to the Chief of the Staff:—

Chief of Staff.

Admiral Carden's Report, No. 194 of the 10th instant, on the progress of operations in the Dardanelles, shows he has made good progress, but that his operations are now greatly retarded by concealed batteries of howitzers, and that their effects are now as formidable as the heavy guns in the permanent batteries. He also states that demolition parties are essential to render the guns useless. The enemy's military forces have prevented this work from being effectually completed at the entrance, and they will be in even a better position to prevent it further up the Straits.

These points have all been foreseen, and a small military

two hours later I left London as the officer responsible for preparing appreciations and plans of operations for the consideration of Sir Ian's Chief of the Staff. Up to that moment I had not heard one single word of the situation or what we had got to do. It was not until our journey had begun that I was able to ask some questions about the task that lay before us, and I shall never forget the dismay and foreboding with which I learnt that apart from Lord Kitchener's very brief instructions, a pre-war Admiralty report on the Dardanelles defences, and an out-of-date map, Sir Ian had been given practically no information whatever. Surely we might at least have been shown the Greek plan for an attack on the peninsula, which, though we did not know it at the time, was apparently in some War Office pigeonhole on the day we left. Various intelligence officers already in the Mediterranean (including Doughty-Wylie, soon to lose his life while winning an immortal V.C. at the landing, William Deedes, later of Palestine fame, and George Lloyd, soon afterwards to become Governor of Bombay) were to join Sir Ian at Mudros with the latest available information about the enemy. But meanwhile the 29th Division was to be embarked without any regard to its most probable rôle on arrival; and it was obvious that before it could carry out an opposed landing its units would all have to be re-packed, under the watchful eyes of the enemy's agents, in accordance with plans which we could not even begin to work out before the troops were themselves half-way to the Dardanelles.'

force supplied to deal with them, but the Vice-Admiral was instructed not to risk this force on shore in positions where they cannot be covered by ships' guns without further reference to the Admiralty.

The position has considerably changed recently; there are now ample military forces ready at short notice for co-operation with him, if necessary, and I suggest the time has arrived to make use of them.

To advance further with a rush over unswept minefields and in waters commanded at short range by heavy guns, howitzers and torpedo-tubes, must involve serious losses in ships and men, and *will not* achieve the object of making the Straits a safe waterway for the transports. The Gallipoli Peninsula must be cleared of the enemy's artillery before this is achieved, and its occupation is a practical necessity before the Straits are safe for the passage of troops as far as the Sea of Marmora.

I suggest the Vice-Admiral be asked if he considers the time has now arrived to make use of military forces to occupy the Gallipoli Peninsula, and clear away the enemy artillery on that side—an operation he would support with his squadrons. With the Peninsula in our possession, the concealed batteries on the Asiatic side, which are less formidable, could be dealt with more easily from the heights on shore than by ships' guns afloat, and the troops should be of great assistance in the demolition of the fortress's guns.

H. B. J.

This minute reveals a certain confusion of thought.

No one had ever suggested advancing 'with a rush over unswept minefields,' etc., and the whole of the plans to the detailed shaping of which Sir Henry Jackson had devoted so much study, proceeded upon exactly the opposite principle. In fact, the distinction between the 'rushing' and the 'piecemeal reduction' was the whole foundation of the naval policy. One would have expected not to encounter such expressions at this stage from this quarter. The alternative was not between a naval 'rush' and a considerable military landing, but between such a landing and further perseverance in the naval plan of gradual advance, or in a combination of these two.

It was difficult to judge the prospects of a military landing at this juncture. No one knew what troops the Turks had on the spot. Vice-Admiral Carden had stated in his telegram of February 23 that 'the garrison of the Gallipoli Peninsula is about 40,000 men.' This was also the working basis assumed by the War Office. We now know that the force actually in the Peninsula at this date was under 20,000, scattered along the coast in small parties without supports or reserves. It seems probable that if the 29th Division had been on the spot in fighting order, it could have been landed, with whatever troops were sent from Egypt, at this period without severe loss, and could have occupied very important and probably decisive positions. Thereafter the force landed would have had to sustain heavy and increasing Turkish attack. But there is no reason why they should not have held their ground, and they could have been continually reinforced from Egypt, and later from England, at a far greater rate than the enemy. The possession of the vital observation-point of Achi Baba would have enabled the indirect naval fire to be directed with the utmost accuracy upon the forts at the Narrows. Heavy guns and howitzers, including our new 15-inch howitzers, could also have been landed and brought into action against them at effective ranges. In these circumstances the destruction of the forts within a reasonable time was certain, and the passage of the fleet into the Marmora must have followed. The use of troops on this scale would however have involved a new and serious decision. It meant nothing less than beginning a new campaign, and this would have had to be balanced against further perseverance in the purely naval attack which had not yet been pressed to any conclusion.

I thought it right, without pronouncing an opinion myself, to ask Lord Kitchener for a formal statement of the War Office view upon Sir Henry Jackson's minute. His reply was only what I expected.

March 13, 1915.

First Lord,

In answer to your question, unless it is found that our estimate of the Ottoman strength on the Gallipoli Peninsula is exaggerated and the position on the Kilid Bahr Plateau less strong than anticipated, no operations on a large scale should be attempted until the 29th Division has arrived and is ready to take part in what is likely to prove a difficult undertaking, in which severe fighting must be anticipated.

K.

I do not criticise this decision. It seemed the wisest open in the circumstances. The error lay earlier. Had the 29th Division been sent as originally decided from February 22 onward, it would have reached the scene by the middle of March instead of three weeks later. Had it been packed on the transports in order of battle, it would have gone into action within a few days of its arrival. All the other troops allocated to this theatre were either conveyed to Lemnos from England or France or were waiting with transports alongside at Alexandria by March 17 or 18. From the 20th onward they were all available (so far as sea transport was concerned) for an operation upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. The concentration of all troops allotted, including the French Division, was effected as promised by the Admiralty punctually to the date named, namely, March 17. The naval attack reached its culminating point on the 18th. No large Turkish reinforcements had yet reached the Peninsula. But without the 29th Division, the army could do nothing. This was the vital *key* division, the sole regular division, whose movements and arrival governed everything. Therefore four-fifths of the force assigned to this theatre were concentrated punctually as arranged, and the indispensable remaining fifth, without which they could not act, was three weeks behind them. Thus they were all rendered useless.

* * * * *

By the middle of March we had therefore reached a turning point not only in the naval operations but in the whole enterprise. Hitherto no serious risks have been run, no losses have been sustained, and no important forces deeply engaged. The original Carden plan of gradual piecemeal reduction has been pursued. It has not failed, but it has lagged, and it is now so feebly pressed as almost to be at a standstill. Meanwhile, time is passing. Nearly a month has gone since we opened fire. What are the Turks doing? Clearly they must be reinforcing, fortifying, laying new mines, erecting new torpedo-tubes, mounting new guns under the organising energy of their German instructors. What have the Germans themselves been doing? It would probably take about a month to send submarines from the Elbe to the Ægean. Have they been sent? Are they on their way? How far off are they? *They may be very near.* This was a rapidly growing anxiety. It was also a spur. Surely now the moment has been reached to review the whole position and policy. Surely this is the very moment foreseen from the beginning when, 'if matters did not go as we hoped, if the resistance of the forts proved too strong,' we could, if we chose, break off the operation. Observe we could, in fact, do it in a moment. One gesture with the wand, and the whole armada assembled at the Dardanelles, or moving thither—battleships, cruisers, destroyers, trawlers, supply ships, transports—would melt and vanish away. Evening would close on a mighty Navy engaged in a world-arresting attack; and the sun might rise on empty seas and silent shores.

Further, was not this the moment to consider alternatives. The prolonged bombardment of the Dardanelles had assuredly drawn continually increasing Turkish forces to the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Asiatic shore. Guns, ammunition supplies of every kind, with which the Turks were so ill-provided, had been scraped and dragged from every other point, or were on the move. Moreover, the Russians had, by a brilliant effort, largely restored the situation in the Caucasus. The British

and French troops now on the sea might not be strong enough to land and storm the plateaus and ridges of Gallipoli. But no one could doubt their ability to take and hold Alexandretta —thus cutting from the Turkish Empire one vast portion, severing the communications of their army threatening Egypt, and intercepting the stream of sorely needed supplies and food-stuffs from the East. For such a descent, the Dardanelles operations were the best of all preliminaries—a sincere feint.

On me these considerations made no impression. I knew them all and I rejected them all. I was unswervingly set upon the main enterprise. I believed that if we tried hard enough we could force the Dardanelles, and that if we succeeded in this a truly decisive victory would have been gained. But where were the admirals, generals and statesmen, who did not share these clear-cut conclusions, who had doubts—had always had doubts about the feasibility of the operation, about the margin of the Grand Fleet, about the utility of operations in the Eastern theatre! Here surely was the time for them. Here surely was the time for Lord Fisher. He could say with perfect propriety and consistency, 'We have given the Carden plan a good trial. I never liked it much. It has not come off: but it has been a very good demonstration; it has fooled the Turks; it has helped the Russians; it has cost us practically nothing—now let us break off altogether or turn to something else.' Later on in April, when we were far more deeply committed, had suffered palpable loss and rebuff, and could not withdraw without great injury to our war prestige, suggestions of this kind were indeed made. But now it was certainly an arguable policy to close the account, and in a naval sense it was the easiest thing in the world to do.

But what happened? So far from wishing to break off the operation, the First Sea Lord was never at any time so resolute in its support. He assented willingly and cordially to the new decision which was now taken to change the gradual tentative limited-liability advance into a hard, determined and neces-

sarily hazardous attack. He approved the momentous Admiralty telegrams which I now drafted after full discussions in our War Group, and, of course, with continuous reference to the Prime Minister. He even offered to go out and hoist his flag and take command at the Dardanelles himself, saying that the responsibility was so great that it could only be borne by the highest authority. Subsequently, although it greatly complicated his position, Lord Fisher himself informed the Dardanelles Commissioners of this fact in a very frank and chivalrous manner.

So far as the other responsible authorities cited in these pages were concerned, no sign of disagreement was manifested. Sir Arthur Wilson, Sir Henry Jackson, Admiral Oliver, Commodore de Bartolomé all were united and agreed to press on and to press hard. The Ministers seemed equally decided. War Office and Foreign Office were eager and hopeful. The Prime Minister did not even think it necessary to summon a council and put the point to them. I have never concealed my opinion. I rejoiced to find so much agreement and force gathering behind the enterprise. My only complaint has been that this high resolve was not carried through by all parties to a definite conclusion.

What was the explanation of this unity and resolution? The vision of victory had lighted the mental scene. The immense significance of the Dardanelles and of the city which lay beyond had possessed all minds. The whole combination which had been dispersed by Russia on March 6 was still latent. The attitude of Italy, of Bulgaria, of Roumania, of Greece absorbed attention. Every one's blood was up. There was a virile readiness to do and dare. All the will-power and cohesion necessary to mount and launch a great operation by sea and land were now forthcoming. But alas a month too late!

On the Admiralty War Group all were agreed upon the following telegram to Admiral Carden.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral Carden.

March 11, 1915, 1.35 p.m.

101. Your 194. Your original instructions laid stress on caution and deliberate methods, and we approve highly the skill and patience with which you have advanced hitherto without loss.

The results to be gained are, however, great enough to justify loss of ships and men if success cannot be obtained without. The turning of the corner at Chanak may decide the whole operation and produce consequences of a decisive character upon the war, and we suggest for your consideration that a point has now been reached when it is necessary, choosing favourable weather conditions, to overwhelm the forts at the Narrows at decisive range by the fire of the largest number of guns, great and small, that can be brought to bear upon them. Under cover of this fire the guns at the forts might be destroyed by landing parties, and as much as possible of the minefield swept up. This operation might have to be repeated until all the forts at the Narrows had been destroyed and the approaches cleared of mines.

We do not wish to hurry you or urge you beyond your judgment, but we recognise clearly that at a certain period in your operations you will have to press hard for a decision, and we desire to know whether you consider that point has now been reached. We shall support you in well-conceived action for forcing a decision, even if regrettable losses are entailed.

We wish to hear your views before you take any decisive departure from the present policy.

Vice-Admiral Carden to Admiralty.

March 14, 1915, *noon.*

Fully concur with the view of Admiralty telegram 101. It is considered stage is reached when vigorous sustained action is necessary for success.

In my opinion military operations on large scale should be commenced immediately in order to ensure my communication line immediately fleet enters Sea of Marmora.

The losses in passing through Narrows may be great; therefore submit that further ships be held in readiness at short notice and additional ammunition be despatched as soon as possible. . . .

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral Carden.

March 15, 1915, 1.40 a.m.

109. You must concert any military operations on a large scale which you consider necessary with General Hamilton when he arrives on Tuesday night. Meanwhile we are asking War Office to send the rest of the two Australian divisions to Mudros Bay at once, thus giving, with the French, approximately 59,000 men available after 18th. This will be confirmed later. 29th Division, 18,000 additional, cannot arrive till April 2.

Secondly, we understand that it is your intention to sweep a good clear passage through the minefields to enable the forts at the Narrows eventually to be attacked at close range, and to cover this operation whether against the forts or [against] the light and movable armament, by whatever fire is necessary from the Battle Fleet, and that this task will probably take several days. After this is completed we understand you intend to engage the forts at the Narrows at decisive range and put them effectually out of action. You will then proceed again at your convenience with the attack on the forts beyond, and any further sweeping operations which may be necessary. If this is your intention, we cordially approve it. We wish it to be pressed forward without hurry, but without loss of time. We do not gather that at this stage you contemplate any attempt to rush the passage without having previously cleared a channel through the mines and destroyed the primary armament of the forts. We wish to be consulted before any operation of such a nature is decided on, and before undertaking it the parts to be played by the army and navy in close co-operation would require careful study, and it might then be found that decisive military action to take the Kilid Bahr plateau would be less costly than a naval rush. You will be informed later about the ammunition, aeroplanes and minesweepers.

Vice-Admiral Carden to Admiralty.

March 15, 1915, 9.15 a.m.

211. I fully appreciate the situation, and intend, as stated in my telegram of March 14, to vigorously attack fortresses at the Narrows, clearing minefields under cover of attack. Good

visibility is essential, and I will take first favourable opportunity. I am requesting Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Squadron, to hold in readiness *Triumph*, *Swiftsure*, to join me at short notice. . . .

These two Admiralty telegrams 101 and 109 were very serious messages to send to the fleet. They had the intention among other things of making the Admiral feel that if he made a determined effort to force the passage and suffered very heavy losses, or the whole operation miscarried, the responsibility would rest with his superiors at home. He had only to think of his task and of the enemy in his front.

* * * * *

Everything being settled for the attack, I took two days' holiday and went to Sir John French's Headquarters (where I was of course on the direct telephone) to await results. I had no sooner got there than I received a telegram from Vice-Admiral Carden to the Admiralty stating that he had been obliged to go on the sick list under decision of his Medical Officer. He recommended that the conduct of the operations should be entrusted to Vice-Admiral de Robeck who, he said, 'was well in touch with all the arrangements present and future and has been of the greatest assistance in their preparation.'

This was a disconcerting event. We had arrived at complete understanding with Vice-Admiral Carden. He was the responsible author of the gradual naval attack. He had declared himself in the fullest agreement with the adoption of a more vigorous method. He was deeply engaged in the business, and was bound to fight it through to a conclusion. Now on the eve of battle he had suddenly collapsed. We had to begin again with somebody else. I had become acquainted with Admiral de Robeck during the previous three years. He bore an exceptionally high reputation in the service. He was a good sea officer and a fine disciplinarian. Before the war he had served during my tenure for two years on the East Coast

as Admiral of Patrols. I had not always agreed with the schemes which he made in this capacity for dealing with war problems. One could not feel that his training and experience up to this period had led him to think deeply on the larger aspects of strategy and tactics. His character, personality, and zeal inspired confidence in all. The course of events pointed to him as the proper successor of Admiral Carden. He was, it is true, junior in substantive rank to Rear-Admiral Wemyss, now commanding the base at Mudros; but he had been Second-in-Command throughout the operations and had all their threads in his hands. Wemyss also was deeply engaged in the administrative crisis caused by the hourly arrival of the transports containing the Army. To exchange these officers merely on grounds of seniority seemed clearly wrong. Wemyss himself, with high public spirit, spontaneously telegraphed: 'I am quite prepared to act under the orders of de Robeck if you should think it desirable to promote him. De Robeck and I are in perfect accord and can loyally co-operate whichever way you decide.' The decision was virtually inevitable. Thus carefully did Destiny pick her footsteps at the Dardanelles.

I deemed it indispensable to come to a complete understanding with Admiral de Robeck and to make sure once and for all that he was in full agreement with the Admiralty and ready to take up the operations from the point at which Vice-Admiral Carden had been forced to relinquish them. I therefore sent, after consulting Lord Fisher, the following telegram from Sir John French's Headquarters:—

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

March 17, 1915.

Personal and Secret from First Lord. In entrusting to you with great confidence the command of the Mediterranean Detached Fleet I presume you are in full accord with Admiralty telegram 101 and Admiralty telegram 109 and Vice-Admiral

Carden's answers thereto, and that you consider, after separate and independent judgment, that the immediate operations proposed are wise and practicable. If not, do not hesitate to say so. If so, execute them without delay and without further reference at the first favourable opportunity. Report fully from day to day. Work in closest harmony with General Hamilton. Make any proposals you think fit for the subordinate commands. Wemyss is your second in command. All good fortune attend you.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Admiralty.

March 17, 1915, 10.20 a.m.

First Lord of Admiralty. Secret and Personal.

228. From Vice-Admiral de Robeck. Thank you for your telegram. I am in full agreement with telegrams mentioned. Operations will proceed to-morrow, weather permitting. My view is that everything depends on our ability to clear the minefields for forcing the Narrows, and this necessitates silencing the forts during the process of sweeping. Generals Hamilton and D'Amade and Admiral Wemyss have been on board to-day, and interview entirely satisfactory.

And the next day.

March 18, 1915.

Weather fine. Operations about to begin.

CHAPTER XI

THE 18TH OF MARCH

The Official Account—The Plan of Attack—The Fatal Omission—The Action Begins—The Forts Dominated—The *Bouvet* Mined and Sunk—The Bombardment Continued—*Inflexible* and *Irresistible* Mined—The Attack Suspended—*Ocean* Mined—Losses in Ships and Men—How I Spent March 18—News of the Action Received at the Admiralty—General Resolve to Fight It Out—Reinforcements; Telegrams—Admiral de Robeck's Intentions on the 19th and 20th—His Telegram of the 23d—Proposed Admiralty Orders to Renew the Battle—The First Sea Lord's Refusal—Impossibility of Procuring an Offensive Decision—My Further Efforts.

ON the morning of March 18 the whole Allied fleet advanced to the attack of the Narrows.[1]

The Official Naval History devotes twelve closely printed pages to the general action which followed. Almost all the essential facts known at the present time are stated in this account. But they are presented with so little order, with such confusion in chronology, and with such slight or erroneous discrimination between the relative importance of facts and events that no clear picture is afforded to the lay reader. The fortunes of individual ships described in great detail and profusion, the many acts of bravery and skill, the salvage of injured vessels, the rescue of their crews, overlay the story. These are interspersed with reflections and surmises as to the possibilities of success and the effect of the fire upon the Turkish forts, which are sometimes based upon the knowledge possessed at the moment, and sometimes upon the later and fuller information collected after the Armistice. The vital questions connected with the Turkish ammunition supply and with the cause of the mining of the *Bouvet*, *Irresistible*, *Ocean*

[1] See Map of Plan facing page 244.

and *Inflexible* are relegated to foot-notes, apparently added after the main account had been completed. Torn between a benevolent desire to avoid throwing blame upon the Admiralty for ordering the attack, or upon the Admiral for not succeeding in it, between a wish to do justice to the power and achievements of the fleet, and a fear of unduly depreciating the remaining resources of the Turkish resistance, the author almost seems to have sought refuge in obscure and inconclusive narration. The story is, however, fairly simple and may be briefly told.

Admiral de Robeck's plan was to silence simultaneously the forts which guarded the Narrows and the batteries protecting the minefields. Ten battleships were assigned to the attack and six to their relief at four-hour intervals. The attack was to be opened at long range by the four modern ships. When the forts were partially subdued the four ships of the French squadron were to pass through the intervals of first line and engage the forts at 8,000 yards. As soon as the forts were dominated the mine-sweepers were to clear a 900-yards channel through the five lines of mines constituting the Kephez minefield. The sweeping was to be continued throughout the night, covered by two battleships, while the rest of the fleet withdrew. The next morning, if the channel had been cleared, the fleet would advance through it into Sari Siglar Bay, and batter the forts at the Narrows at short and decisive range. The sweeping of the minefields at the Narrows would follow the destruction or effective disablement of these forts.

The actual distribution of duties was as follows:—

Line A.	*Queen Elizabeth* *Agamemnon* *Lord Nelson* *Inflexible*	To fire at the forts at the Narrows at 14,000 yards.
	Triumph *Prince George*	To fire at the intermediate defences.

Line B.	*Suffren* *Bouvet* *Charlemagne* *Gaulois*	To fire later at the forts at the Narrows at 8,000 yards.
	Cornwallis *Canopus*	To cover the mine-sweeping during the night.
	Vengeance *Irresistible* *Albion* *Ocean* *Swiftsure* *Majestic*	Relief.

The foundation of the whole plan was that the battleships would only fight and manœuvre in waters which had been thoroughly swept and were known to be clear of mines. On March 7 the bombarding area had been found free and was, in fact, free from mines. Sweeping operations had been carried out almost every night up to 8,000 yards from the Narrows and a few sweeps had been made along the Asiatic shore. Eren Keui Bay had not, however, been swept to any large extent. An experiment carried out by the *Ark Royal* had led to the belief that a seaplane or aeroplane flying above a minefield could discern mines at 18-feet depth in the clear water below. The seaplanes frequently reported the presence of mines in the regular minefields, and their reports had come to be relied upon not only in the positive sense that mines were in a certain place, but in the much wider and more questionable negative sense that there were no mines where none were reported. We now know that the experiment of the *Ark Royal* was misleading. The seaplanes could not, in fact, locate the regular Turkish minefields, and what they saw and reported were only mines exceptionally near the surface or submerged net buoys. Every allowance must be made for the difficulty of the task and for the limited means available for discharging it. But the operation

of sweeping the areas from which the ships were to bombard, which were fully under our control and not at all to be confused with the strongly guarded regular minefields, was the indispensable preliminary to any naval attack upon the forts. This, as we now know, was not achieved because the sweepers were inadequate both in numbers and efficiency, and this fact led directly to the losses in the attack of March 18, and indirectly to the abandonment of the whole naval enterprise.

For in the early and squally dawn of March 8, while the British night patrol of destroyers was withdrawing from the Straits, the little Turkish steamer *Nousret* had laid a new line of twenty mines in Eren Keui Bay parallel to the shore and moored about 100 to 150 yards apart. These mines were intended to catch ships attempting to renew the bombardment from the positions in which they had worked on March 6 and 7. In fact, however, they played a recognisable part in the history of the Great War. Three of them were found and destroyed by the sweepers on March 16, but as no more were encountered, it was not realised that they were part of a line of mines. There the rest lay during the ten days before the attack undetected and unsuspected. There they were now lying when in the brilliant sunshine of March 18 the tremendous armada assembled under Admiral de Robeck's command advanced majestically to the execution of a momentous plan.

At about half-past eleven the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Agamemnon*, *Lord Nelson* and *Inflexible* opened fire in succession on the forts at the Narrows at 14,400 yards range and a few minutes later the whole of Line A was in action. The ships were immediately subjected to a heavy fire from the movable howitzers and field guns of the Intermediate Defences. All ships were struck several times, but their armour effectually protected them from damage. The forts also began to fire, but the range was too great for them. At 11.50 a big explosion took place in Fort 20 on which the *Queen Elizabeth* was firing and both the *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson* were seen to be hitting

Forts 13 and 17 repeatedly. A few minutes after midday the French squadron advanced through the bombarding line and, gallantly led by Admiral Guépratte, began to engage the forts at closer range. All the forts replied vigorously and the firing on both sides became tremendous, the whole of Lines A and B firing simultaneously both at the forts and at the lighter batteries. The spectacle at this period is described as one of terrible magnificence. The mighty ships wheeling, manœuvring and firing their guns, great and small, amid fountains of water; the forts in clouds of dust and smoke pierced by enormous flashes; the roar of the cannonade reverberating back from the hills on each side of the Straits, both shores alive with the discharges of field guns; the attendant destroyers, the picket-boats darting hither and thither on their perilous service—all displayed under shining skies and upon calm blue water, combined to make an impression of inconceivable majesty and crisis. This period lasted for about an hour. A little before 1 o'clock a great explosion occurred in Fort 13. A quarter of an hour later Fort 8 ceased firing. The *Gaulois* and the *Charlemagne* were now hitting Forts 13 and 16 with regularity. At half-past one the fire of the forts slackened appreciably. By a quarter to two their fire had almost ceased. Their men had been driven, or withdrawn, from the guns, and the whole interior of the works was obstructed with debris.

The mine-sweepers were now ordered to advance. The French squadron which had borne the brunt was recalled and the battleships of the relief moved forward to take their places. Scarcely any damage had been done to the British ships, though the *Inflexible* had her fore-bridge wrecked and on fire; and several of the French ships had been a good deal knocked about. In the whole fleet, however, not one vessel had been injured in its fighting or motive power. The crews, protected by the strong steel armour, had suffered scarcely any loss. Not 40 men in all had been killed or wounded. So far the plan seemed to be working well. The general impression was that

the forts were dominated and that, had there been no minefield, the ships could have steamed through the Straits, keeping the forts pinned down by their fire with little loss. It is certain, at any rate, that we had the measure of the forts. But now the first of the disasters occurred.

At 1.54, as the *Bouvet* was coming out of the Straits, following her flagship, the *Suffren*, she struck one of the mines in Eren Keui Bay. The explosion fired her magazine and in two minutes she vanished beneath the surface in a cloud of smoke and steam, only 66 men being saved. The cause of her destruction was attributed on the *Queen Elizabeth* to a heavy shell, and the operations continued without a pause.[1]

At 2 o'clock the forts were completely silent and only the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Lord Nelson* continued to fire at them. The mine-sweepers were now ordered to enter the Straits; and the relieving line of 'B' battleships at the same time advanced to engage the forts at closer range. All the forts resumed a rapid but ineffective fire, and the *Queen Elizabeth* replied with salvos. This second phase also continued for over an hour, the forts firing spasmodically and without injuring the fleet. There is no doubt that at this time the Turkish fire control and communications were deranged. Meanwhile, the mine-sweepers were advancing slowly against the current towards the Kephez minefield. On their way they exploded three and fished up three more of the newly laid mines in Eren Keui Bay. It was of this moment in the action that Admiral de Robeck subsequently reported, 'At 4 p.m. the forts of the Narrows were practically silenced; the batteries guarding the minefields were put to flight, and the situation appeared to be most favourable for clearing the minefields.'

At 4.11 the *Inflexible*, which all day had been lying in or close to the unknown minefield, reported she had struck a mine.

[1] There is still doubt whether the *Bouvet* struck a mine, or whether a shell exploded her magazine. She was over the new minefield, and the Turks think she was destroyed by it.

She took a serious list and her condition was evidently one of danger. Three minutes later it was seen that the *Irresistible* had also listed and was apparently unable to move. At 4.50 Admiral de Robeck learned for certain that this ship also had struck a mine. The appearance of these mines in water which it had been confidently believed was entirely free from them, and in which the fleet had been manœuvring all day was profoundly disconcerting. It was not thought possible at this time that a line of moored mines could have been laid in our own waters, nor was this known till the end of the war. What then was the mysterious and terrific agency which had struck these deadly blows? Was it torpedoes fired from some concealed or submerged station on the shore? Was it a great shoal of floating mines thrown overboard by the Turks above the Narrows and only now carried by the current among the fleet? Several such mines were seen drifting down during the afternoon, and had been grappled with by the hardy picket-boats. Moreover, just before the beginning of the action four Turkish steamers had been seen waiting in the Narrows, presumably to discharge cargoes of mines at the proper moment.[1] This was therefore the more probable explanation. But anyhow, it was obvious that the area in which the ships were working was not free from mines, or that some other even more alarming cause was active.

On this, Admiral de Robeck determined to break off the action. No one can accuse this decision. It was impossible to continue the attack on the forts in the face of such losses and uncertainty. The two battleships which were to have covered the sweeping operations during the night could not be left in the Straits. Moreover, the Intermediate Forts (7 and 8) were not yet controlled. The sweeping operations could not therefore proceed and the whole operation must be interrupted. About 5 o'clock orders were given for a general retirement, and all attention was concentrated on the

[1] There was in fact one ship for that purpose.

wounded ships and the saving of their crews. While going to the aid of the *Irresistible* the *Ocean* ran into the same minefield and was also stricken. The rest of the story is soon told. The *Inflexible* reached Tenedos Island safely and was anchored in shallow water. The crews of the *Irresistible* and *Ocean* were taken off in destroyers which were most skilfully and courageously handled, and both these derelict battleships foundered during the night in the depths of the Straits.

This ended the action of March 18. For all the tremendous firing and prodigious aspect of the battle, the bloodshed on both sides was incredibly small. The Turkish lost less than 150 men in their batteries and forts, and in the whole British Fleet only 61 men were killed and wounded. The French, however, had to mourn the crew of the *Bouvet*, of whom nearly 600 perished. Of the ships, the *Inflexible* was put out of action for six weeks; the *Gaulois* had been severely injured by gunfire; and three of the old battleships had been sunk. We shall see later on what was the condition of the enemy and his defences.

* * * * *

I passed the day of the 18th in the French trenches among the sand-dunes of the Belgian coast. Here the snarling lines which stretched from Switzerland touched the sea, and the barbed wire ran down the beach into salt water. Corpses entangled in the wire were covered with seaweed and washed by the tides as they mouldered. Others in groups of ten or twelve lay at the foot of the sandhills blasted in their charge, but with the sense and aspect of attack still eloquent in their attitude and order. These dead had lain there for months, and the sand gradually gained upon them, softening their outlines. It was as if Nature was gathering them to herself. The lines were very close together, and in places only a few yards apart. A vigilant silence reigned, broken by occasional guns. The defences in the sand were complicated and novel. They presented features I had not seen on any other part of the front.

It was fine weather, and I was thankful to keep my mind from dwelling on the events that I knew were taking place on the other sea flank of the hostile line. I returned to England during the night of the 18th in order to receive the account of the action.

It reached me in the morning, and at the first glance one could see that no good result had been achieved.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Admiralty.

March 18, 1915. (*Received* 8.35 a.m.)

233. Attack on defences at Narrows commenced 10.45 a.m. *Queen Elizabeth, Inflexible, Agamemnon, Lord Nelson* first bombarded Forts 13, 16, 17, 19, 20. *Triumph, Prince George* fired at Batteries 7, 8, and 8*a*. Heavy fire was opened on ships from howitzers and field guns. 12.22 p.m. *Suffren, Gaulois, Charlemagne, Bouvet* advanced up Dardanelles, engaged forts at closer range. Forts 13, 19, 7, 8 opened heavy fire. This was silenced by the ten battleships inside the Straits; during this period all ships were hit several times. By 1.25 p.m. forts had ceased firing. *Vengeance, Irresistible, Albion, Ocean, Swiftsure* and *Majestic* were ordered to relieve the six old battleships inside Straits. As the French squadron were passing out *Bouvet*, 1.54 p.m., was seen to be in distress; large volume black smoke suddenly appeared on starboard quarter, and before any assistance could be rendered she heeled over and sank in 36 fathoms north of Eren Keui village in under three minutes. Explosion on *Bouvet* appeared to be an internal one. 2.25 p.m., relief battleships were passing up, and 2.36 p.m. they were engaging forts, who again opened fire. Attack on forts continued, and mine-sweepers were ordered in. 4.9 p.m., *Irresistible* was seen to have a list to starboard. 4.14 p.m., *Inflexible* quitted the line and reported having struck a mine on the starboard side; she proceeded out of Dardanelles and is now at Tenedos. At 4.30 p.m. *Irresistible* was listing heavily. *Wear* went alongside to take off her crew, who were transferred to *Queen Elizabeth*. At 5.30 ship was abandoned, being under hot fire and sinking. She probably struck a mine manœuvring astern whilst engaging Fort 8, both engine rooms being immediately flooded. At 6.5 *Ocean*, who had been covering rescue of *Irresistible*, also struck a mine. She took a heavy list and

was abandoned when it was obvious she could not remain afloat; both vessels sunk in deep water. Rear-Admiral Guépratte, at 5.15, reported *Gaulois* leaking badly, her condition serious. She has had to be beached on Drepano Island, bows badly damaged by gunfire. . . . All ships were manœuvred in area well below reported minefield. Mine-sweepers had swept area on several occasions and reported it clear, and sea-planes had not located any mines in it.

A later message added:—

With the exception of ships lost and damaged, squadron is ready for immediate action, but the plan of attack must be reconsidered and means found to deal with floating mines.

I regarded this news only as the results of the first day's fighting. It never occurred to me for a moment that we should not go on within the limits of what we had decided to risk, until we reached a decision one way or the other. I found Lord Fisher and Sir Arthur Wilson in the same mood. Both met me together that morning with expressions of firm determination to fight it out. The First Sea Lord immediately ordered two battleships, the *London* and *Prince of Wales*, to reinforce Admiral de Robeck's fleet and to replace casualties, in addition to the *Queen* and *Implacable* which were already on their way. The French Minister of Marine telegraphed that he was sending the *Henri IV* to replace the *Bouvet*. We all repaired to the War Council which met at 11 o'clock. The War Council was also quite steady and determined, and after hearing our news authorised 'The First Lord of the Admiralty to inform Vice-Admiral de Robeck that he could continue the naval operations against the Dardanelles if he thought fit.'

On this we telegraphed.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

March 20, 1915.

We regret the losses you have suffered in your resolute attack. Convey to all ranks and ratings their Lordships'

approbation of their conduct in action and seamanlike skill and prudence with which His Majesty's ships were handled. Convey to the French squadron the Admiralty's appreciation of their loyal and effective support, and our sorrow for the losses they have sustained.

Queen and *Implacable* should join you very soon; and *London* and *Prince of Wales* sail to-night.

Please telegraph any information as to damage done to forts, and also full casualties and ammunition expended.

It appears important not to let the forts be repaired, or to encourage enemy by an apparent suspension of the operations. Ample supplies of 15-inch ammunition are available for indirect fire of *Queen Elizabeth* across the peninsula.

On the 20th Admiral de Robeck telegraphed to the Admiralty:

Plan for re-organising mine-sweeping progressing.

Eight *Beagle* class being fitted as mine-sweepers. Six *River* class and four torpedo boats as mine-seekers with light sweeps, and a flotilla of picket-boats with explosive creeps.

Fifty British mine-sweepers, manned entirely by volunteers, and twelve French sweepers will be available.

The whole area in which ships will manœuvre, in order to dominate forts at the Narrows and the batteries protecting the Kephez minefields, will be thoroughly swept again; no more night sweeping will be carried out.

Tunny nets and indicator nets will be laid across Straits night before the attack is renewed.

It is hoped to be in a position to commence operations in three or four days, but delay is inevitable, as new crews and destroyers will need some preliminary practice.

No ship will enter Dardanelles unless everything is ready for a sustained attack.

In the meantime, feints at landing in various places will be made in order to draw off some of the enemy's field guns.

And later in the day:—

* * * * *

The fighting efficiency of other ships is unimpaired, their damage being confined to funnels, superstructure, decks, etc.

* * * * *

All these mines (the floating mines) were sighted after 4 p.m., which points to their having been released from Chanak after the ships entered the Straits.

4 p.m. the forts of the Narrows were practically silenced. Batteries guarding minefields were put to flight, and situation appeared to be most favourable for clearing the minefields.

Thus everything was so far steady and resolved. The First Sea Lord and the Admiralty War Group, the Prime Minister and the War Council, the French Ministry of Marine, Admiral de Robeck and the French Admiral on the spot—all had no other idea but to persevere in accordance with the solemn decisions which had been taken.

But now suddenly on the 23rd came a telegram of a totally different character.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Admiralty.

March 23, 1915. *Received* 6.30 a.m.

818. At meeting to-day with Generals Hamilton and Birdwood the former told me Army will not be in a position to undertake any military operations before 14th April. In order to maintain our communications when the fleet penetrates into the Sea of Marmora it is necessary to destroy all guns of position guarding the Straits. These are numerous, and only small percentage can be rendered useless by gunfire. The landing of demolishing party on the 26th February evidently surprised enemy. From our experience on the 4th March it seems in future destruction of guns will have to be carried out in face of strenuous and well-prepared opposition. I do not think it a practicable operation to land a force adequate to undertake this service inside Dardanelles. General Hamilton concurs in this opinion. If the guns are not destroyed, any success of fleet may be nullified by the Straits closing up after the ships have passed through, and as loss of *matériel* will possibly be heavy, ships may not be available to keep Dardanelles open. The mine menace will continue until the Sea of Marmora is reached, being much greater than was anticipated. It must be carefully and thoroughly dealt with, both as regards mines and floating mines. This will take time to accomplish, but our arrangements will be ready by the time Army can act. It appears better to prepare a decisive effort

about the middle of April rather than risk a great deal for what may possibly be only a partial solution.

I read this telegram with consternation. I feared the perils of the long delay; I feared still more the immense and incalculable extension of the enterprise involved in making a military attack on a large scale. The mere process of landing an army after giving the enemy at least three weeks' additional notice seemed to me to be a most terrible and formidable hazard. It appeared to me at the time a far graver matter in every way than the naval attack. Moreover, what justification was there for abandoning the naval plan on which hitherto all our reasoning and conclusions had been based? The loss of life in the naval operations had been very small. In the whole operation only one ship of any importance (the *Inflexible*) had been damaged, and a month or six weeks in the dockyard at Malta would repair her thoroughly. As for the old battleships, they were doomed in any case to the scrap-heap. Every ship lost was being replaced. Only on the 20th the Admiral had telegraphed: 'From experience gained on 18th I consider forts at the Narrows and the batteries guarding minefields can be dominated after a few days' engagement sufficient to enable mine-sweepers to clear Kephez minefields.' But, if so, why not do this? It was what we had always meant to do. It was what we had decided to do. Why turn and change at this fateful hour and impose upon the Army an ordeal of incalculable severity? An attack by the Army if it failed would commit us irrevocably in a way no naval attack could have done. The risk was greater; the stakes were far higher. I had no doubt whatever what orders should be sent to Admiral de Robeck. I convened an immediate meeting of the Admiralty War Group, and placed the following telegram before them:—

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

Your 818. In view of the dangers of delay through submarine attack and of heavy cost of army operation, and

possibility that it will fail or be only partly effective in opening the Straits, and that the danger of mines will not be relieved by it, we consider that you ought to persevere methodically but resolutely with the plan contained in your instructions and in Admiralty telegram 109, and that you should make all preparations to renew the attack begun on 18th at the first favourable opportunity. You should dominate the forts at the Narrows and sweep the minefield and then batter the forts at close range, taking your time, using your aeroplanes, and all your improved methods of guarding against mines. The destruction of the forts at the Narrows may open the way for a further advance. The entry into the Marmora of a fleet strong enough to beat Turkish Fleet would produce decisive results on the whole situation, and you need not be anxious about your subsequent line of communications. We know the forts are short of ammunition and supply of mines is limited. We do not think the time has yet come to give up the plan of forcing Dardanelles by a purely naval operation.

Commodore de Bartolomé, who starts to-day, will give you our views on points of detail. Meanwhile all your preparations for renewing attack should go forward.

But now immediately I encountered insuperable resistance. The Chief of the Staff was quite ready to order the renewal of the attack; but the First Sea Lord would not agree to the proposed telegram, nor did Sir Arthur Wilson nor Sir Henry Jackson who was present. Lord Fisher took the line that hitherto he had been willing to carry the enterprise forward because it was supported and recommended by the Commander on the spot. But now that Admiral de Robeck and Sir Ian Hamilton had decided on a joint operation, we were bound to accept their views. In fact, he was immensely relieved that the operation was at last assuming the form which in the earliest days he and all of us would have preferred. 'What more could we want? The Army were going to do it. They ought to have done it all along.' But I, seeing how woefully and fearfully the situation was changed to our disadvantage by the delay and exposure, could not stand this. I saw

Admiralty to V.A. de Robeck

(42.) ~~Not sent~~

ADMIRALTY WHITEHALL

Your 818

In view of dangers of ~~or~~ delay through Submarine attack and of heavy cost of Army operation and possibility that it will fail or be only partly effective ~~in~~ opening the ~~way~~ Straits and that the danger of mines will not be relieved by it we consider that you ought to persevere methodically but resolutely with the plan contained in your instructions and in Admiralty telegram 109 and that you sh'd make all preparations to renew the attack ~~of the~~ begun on 18th at the first favourable opportunity. You should dominate the forts at the Narrows & sweep the minefield and then batter the forts at close range taking your time

using your aeroplanes, &
all your improved methods
of guarding against mines.
The destruction of the forts
at the Narrows may open
the way for a further advance.
The entry into the Marmara of the a Fleet
strong enough to beat.
Turkish fleet would
produce decisive results
on the whole situation and you need not be
~~at this stage~~ anxious
about your subsequent line of
communications. We know
the forts are short of ammunition
and supply of mines is
limited. We do not ~~think~~
~~the time has~~ ~~know~~
~~of any~~ think the time has
yet come to give up the
plan of forcing Dardanelles
by a purely naval operation.

Commodore de Bartolome
who starts today will give
you our views on points of detail.
Meanwhile all your preparations
for renewing attack shd go forward.

a vista of terrible consequences behind this infirm relaxation of purpose. For the first time since the war began, high words were used around the octagonal table. I pressed to the very utmost the duty and the need of renewing the naval attack. In this I was stoutly supported by Commodore de Bartolomé; but he was the youngest there, and I could make no headway. I closed the meeting without a decision. I took the draft of my telegram to the Prime Minister. I found him in hearty agreement with it, as was also Mr. Balfour, with whom I discussed it during the day.

Looking back, one can see now that this was the moment for the Prime Minister to intervene and make his view effective. As for me, what could I do? If by resigning I could have procured the decision, I would have done so without a moment's hesitation. It was clear, however, that this would only have made matters worse. Nothing that I could do could overcome the Admirals now they had definitely stuck their toes in. They had only to point to the losses of ships which had been incurred, and every one would have sided with them. I was therefore compelled under extreme duress to abandon the intention of sending direct orders to Admiral de Robeck to renew the attack. I had to content myself with sending a reasoned telegram which, while giving him the strongest possible lead, left the decision still in the Admiral's hands. The case set out in this telegram will be discussed in a later chapter.

First Lord to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

March 24, 1915, 7.35 p.m.

It is clear that the Army should at once prepare to attack the Kilid Bahr plateau at the earliest opportunity, and Lord Kitchener hopes that the 14th April can be antedated. This is a matter for the War Office. But the question now to be decided by Admiralty is whether the time has come to abandon the naval plan of forcing the Dardanelles without the aid of a large army. It may be necessary to accept the check of the 18th as decisive, and to admit that the task is beyond our

powers, and if you think this you should not fail to say so. But, before deciding, certain facts must be weighed: first, the delay and the consequent danger of submarines coming and ruining all; second, the heavy losses, at least 5,000, which the Army would suffer; third, the possibilities of a check in the land operations far more serious than the loss of a few old surplus ships; fourth, the fact that even when the Kilid Bahr plateau has been taken by the Army and the Kilid Bahr group of forts rendered untenable, the Asiatic forts will be still effective, and most of the mine danger which is now your principal difficulty will menace you in the long reaches above the Narrows.

These must be balanced against the risks and hopes of a purely naval undertaking. You must not underrate the supreme moral effect of a British fleet with sufficient fuel and ammunition entering the Sea of Marmora, provided it is strong enough to destroy the Turco-German vessels. The Gallipoli Peninsula would be completely cut off if our ships were on both sides of the Bulair Isthmus. It seems very probable that as soon as it is apparent that the fortresses at the Narrows are not going to stop the fleet, a general evacuation of the peninsula will take place; but anyhow, all troops remaining upon it would be doomed to starvation or surrender. Besides this there is the political effect of the arrival of the fleet before Constantinople, which is incalculable, and may well be absolutely decisive.

Assuming that only the minimum good results follow the successful passage of the fleet into the Marmora, namely, that the Turkish Army on Gallipoli continues to hold out, and with forts and field guns closes up the Straits, and that no revolution occurs at Constantinople, then perhaps in the last resort the Army would have to storm Kilid Bahr plateau, and secure a permanent reopening of the Straits. It would be possible with the ships left behind at the entrance, and with those in Egypt, to give the necessary support to the military operations, so that at the worst the Army would only have to do, after you had got through, what they will have to do anyhow if your telegram is accepted; while, on the other hand, the probability is that your getting through would decide everything in our favour. Further, once through the Dardanelles the current would be with you in any return attack on the forts, and the mining danger would be practically over.

Therefore, danger to your line of communications is not serious or incurable.

What has happened since the 21st to make you alter your intention of renewing the attack as soon as the weather is favourable? We have never contemplated a reckless rush over minefields and past undamaged primary guns. But the original Admiralty instructions and telegram No. 109 prescribed a careful and deliberate method of advance, and I should like to know what are the reasons which, in your opinion, render this no longer possible, in spite of your new aircraft and improved methods of mine-sweeping. We know the forts are short of ammunition. It is probable they have not got many mines. You should be able to feel your way while at the same time pressing hard.

I cannot understand why, as a preliminary step, forts like 7 and 8 should not be demolished by heavy gunfire, first at long range and afterwards at short range, now that you have good aeroplane observation.

I wish to hear further from you before any official reply is sent. You may discuss [this] telegram with General Hamilton if he is with you, and then telegraph fully. Admiralty will then give their decision.

You must of course understand that this telegram is not an executive order, but is sent because it is most important that there should be no misunderstandings at this juncture.

This telegram the First Sea Lord was induced, with some difficulty, to agree to. He himself endeavoured to console me.

'It is the right thing,' he wrote on the 24th, 'without any doubt whatever to send Bartolomé,[1] *and the sooner the better*. Don't delay for *Phaeton*. The French will have a fast vessel at Marseilles or Toulon. . . . *You are very wrong to worry and excite yourself*. Do try and remember that we are the lost ten tribes of Israel. We are sure to win!!! I know I am an optimist! *Always have been!! Thank God. . . . Hustle Bartolomé! Send no more telegrams! Let it alone!*'

Was I, in the light of all that followed, 'wrong to worry and excite myself'? Await the sequel. It is right to feel the things that matter: and to feel them while time remains.

[1] This project was not carried out.

CHAPTER XII

ADMIRAL DE ROBECK'S CHANGE OF PLAN

The Arrival of the Army—Sir Ian Hamilton's Problem—A Choice of Evils—The Change of Base—Admiral de Robeck's Intentions of March 20—The Conference of March 22—Far-reaching Decisions—The Sacred Ships—Admiral de Robeck's Reasons—A Discrepancy—General Liman von Sanders in Command of the Turks—Lord Kitchener Assumes the Burden—His Ideas about the Date of a Military Attack—Sir Ian Hamilton's Reply—My Endeavours to Secure the Sweeping of the Minefield—Complete Cessation of the Naval Offensive—The Wall of Crystal.

WHAT had happened at the Dardanelles? The Army had arrived. From the earliest moment permitted to them the Admiralty had carried all the troops to the point of concentration with punctuality. Sir Ian Hamilton had reached the Dardanelles on the eve of the naval attack on the Narrows, and had witnessed from the bridge of the *Phaeton* its closing scenes. The impression of the sinking of the battleships, the spectacle of the crippled *Inflexible* listed and slowly steaming out of the Straits, the destroyers crowded with the rescued crews, was strong in his mind. These appearances aroused, in a nature chivalrous to a fault, an intense desire to come to the aid and rescue of the sister Service. It was in this mood that he addressed himself to the problem with which he was immediately confronted.

That problem was indeed grave and perplexing in an extreme degree. If the Navy asked for help, Sir Ian Hamilton was resolved to give it to the utmost of his power. If a landing on the tip of the Peninsula and the capture of the Kilid Bahr Plateau would largely solve the naval difficulties, he would attempt it. But obviously then there was not a moment to lose. Every day, every hour, the Turkish defences and

preparations would improve and their forces accumulate. A fortnight before, the disembarkation of 40,000 men on the Peninsula might have been effected without great difficulty. But now sharp fighting must be expected. Still, General Birdwood, who had been watching events on the spot since the beginning of March, was eager to land then and there, and confident that the opposition would be overcome by a prompt attack.

But now, for the first time in these military operations, the General Staff were allowed to have their say. They unfolded to their Commander a massive and overwhelming case. The preparations for the landing under fire required an intense degree of organisation. No preparations had been made. To carry out such an enterprise required, above all, a proportion at least of most highly-trained troops. None were available. The Australians, however brave and ardent, were, like the Royal Naval Division, only partly trained. The 29th Division had just sailed from England, and would not arrive before the first week in April. But how would it then arrive? It had been embarked in twenty-two transports without any idea of having to fight immediately. The ammunition was in one ship, the transport in another, the harness in a third, the machine guns at the bottom of the hold, and so on. Before these trained and excellent troops could go into action, they would have to be disembarked either by small boats in still water or upon a quay, and then completely re-sorted, and organised in fighting trim. Mudros harbour (in Lemnos) offered neither facility. Moreover, although nearly 60,000 men were now available within striking distance of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the supplies were scattered throughout the Mediterranean, the hospitals were not prepared, the staff had never come together. We have seen how Ludendorff, recalled from Liège to restore the situation in East Prussia, telegraphed his preliminary dispositions from Berlin and ran his train literally on to the field of Tannenberg. But he was dealing with the

highly-trained staff and large formations of the German Army, already actively in contact with the enemy. He was free from all those complications which are inseparable from amphibious action and from the combination of the separate services of the sea and land. No such commanding gesture was possible at the Dardanelles.

Sir Ian Hamilton has recorded his plight in pungent sentences:—

Here am I still minus my Adjutant-General, my Quarter-master-General and my Medical Chief, charged with settling the basic question of whether the Army should push off from Lemnos or from Alexandria. Nothing in the world to guide me beyond my own experience and that of my Chief of the General Staff, whose sphere of work and experience lies quite outside these administrative matters. I can see that Lemnos is practically impossible; I fix on Alexandria in the light of Braithwaite's advice and my own hasty study of the map. Almost incredible really, we should have to decide so tremendous an administrative problem off the reel and without any Administrative Staff . . .

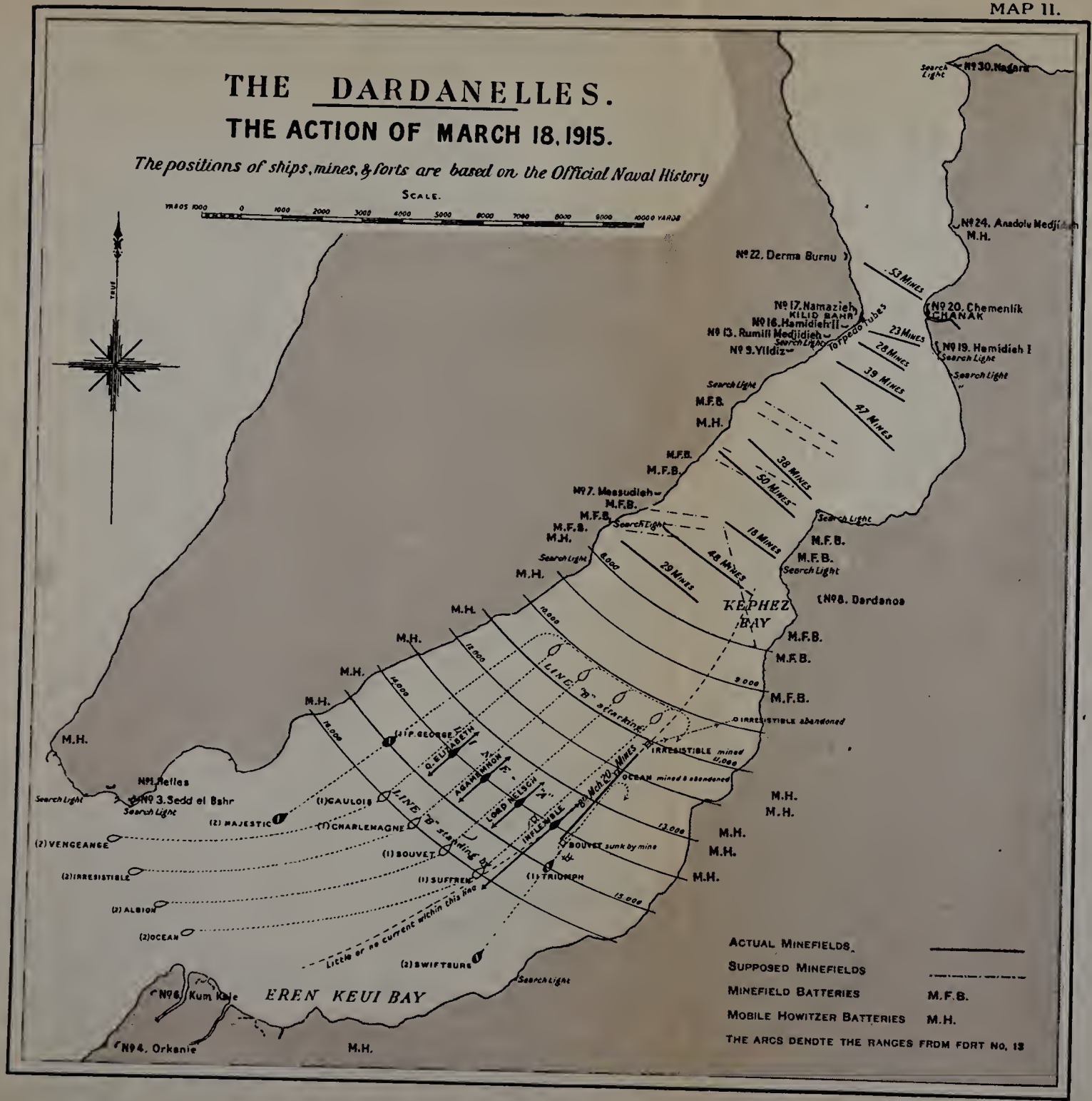
We might sup to-morrow night on Achi Baba. With luck we really might. Had I been here for ten days instead of five, and had I had any time to draft out any sort of scheme, I might have had a dart . . .

I must wait for the 29th Division. By the time they come I can get things straight for a smashing simultaneous blow, and I am resolved that, so far as in me lies, the orders and preparations will then be so thoroughly worked out, so carefully rehearsed, as to give every chance to my men.

If the 29th Division were here. . . . Could I hope for the 29th Division within a week . . . had my staff and self been here ten days ago. . . . Then, the moment the Fleet cried off, we might have had a dash in, right away, with what we have here.

In the choice of evils which now alone was open to Sir Ian Hamilton, his staff pronounced that whatever were the risks of delay, they were less than those of a precipitate and unor-

MAP 11.


THE DARDANELLES.
THE ACTION OF MARCH 18, 1915.
The positions of ships, mines, & forts are based on the Official Naval History
SCALE.
YARDS 1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10000 YARDS
TRUE
Nº 30. Nagara
Nº 24. Anadolu Medjidieh
M.H.
Nº 22. Derma Burnu
53 MINES
Nº 17. Namazieh
KILID BAHR
Nº 16. Hamidieh II
Nº 13. Rumili Medjidieh
Nº 9. Yildiz
Torpedo Tubes
Nº 20. Chemenlik
CHANAK
23 MINES
28 MINES
39 MINES
47 MINES
Nº 19. Hamidieh I
Search Light
M.F.B.
M.H.
38 MINES
50 MINES
Nº 7. Messudieh
18 MINES
48 MINES
29 MINES
Nº 8. Dardanos
KEPHEZ BAY
LINE "B" attacking
IRRESISTIBLE abandoned
IRRESISTIBLE mined
OCEAN mined & abandoned
Q. ELIZABETH
AGAMEMNON
LORD NELSON
INFLEXIBLE
8 Mch. 20 MINES
LINE "B" standing by
(1) F. GEORGE
(1) GAULOIS
(1) CHARLEMAGNE
(1) SOUVET
(1) SUFFREN
(1) TRIUMPH
BOUVET sunk by mine
(2) MAJESTIC
(2) VENGEANCE
(2) IRRESISTIBLE
(2) ALBION
(2) OCEAN
(2) SWIFTSURE
Little or no current within this line
Nº 1. Helles
Nº 3. Sedd el Bahr
Nº 6. Kum Kale
Nº 4. Orkanie
EREN KEUI BAY
ACTUAL MINEFIELDS
SUPPOSED MINEFIELDS
MINEFIELD BATTERIES M.F.B.
MOBILE HOWITZER BATTERIES M.H.
THE ARCS DENOTE THE RANGES FROM FORT No. 13

THE DARDANELLES.

THE ACTION OF MARCH 18, 1915.

ganised assault. The General therefore determined to transfer his base and his Army from Lemnos to Alexandria, leaving only sufficient troops at the Dardanelles for minor enterprises, and to organise from Egypt any large military operation which the Navy might require.

General Sir Ian Hamilton to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

March 20, 1915.

From every point of view I consider change of military base to Alexandria and Port Said advisable. I can bring you military help from there quickly and in better shape than from here, where there are no facilities. Propose therefore to transfer base and troops to Alexandria and Port Said, leaving 4,000 Australian infantry at Lemnos at your disposal. I hope that you will agree. Presume you wish to retain marines now in *Cawdor Castle* and *Braemar Castle* at Tenedos, otherwise they might accompany remainder of naval division to Port Said.

* * * * *

Admiral de Robeck had come out of action on March 18 with every intention of resuming the attack at the earliest opportunity. To Admiral Wemyss at Mudros he telegraphed on the evening of the 18th:—

We have had disastrous day owing either to floating mines or torpedoes from shore tubes fired at long range. H.M.S. *Irresistible* and *Bouvet* sunk. H.M.S. *Ocean* still afloat, but probably lost. H.M.S. *Inflexible* damaged by mine. *Gaulois* badly damaged by gunfire. Other ships all right, and we had much the best of the Forts.[1]

On the 19th he wrote to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

Our men were splendid and thank heaven our loss of life was quite small, though the French lost over 100 (? 600) men when *Bouvet* struck a mine.

How our ships struck mines in an area that was reported clear and swept the previous night I do not know, unless they were floating mines started from the Narrows.

[1] Sir Ian Hamilton's 'Gallipoli Diary,' p. 39.

I was sad to lose ships and my heart aches when one thinks of it; one must do what one is told and take risks or otherwise we cannot win.[1] We are all getting ready for another go and not in the least beaten or downhearted. The big forts were silenced for a long time and everything was going well, until *Bouvet* struck a mine. It is hard to say what amount of damage we did, I don't know—there were big explosions in the Forts![2]

We have seen the telegrams which he sent to the Admiralty on the 20th. Sir Ian Hamilton's intimation that a change of base and consequent delay were inevitable did not affect the Admiral's intention to renew the naval attack. On the contrary, by revealing how long an interval must intervene before a general military attack, it might well have been expected to strengthen his resolve. His answer to Sir Ian Hamilton on the evening of the 20th shows that this was apparently the case.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Sir Ian Hamilton.

As a military measure I concur with your proposal to make Egypt the headquarters, but submit political result of withdrawal of troops from Mudros at the moment requires the gravest consideration. If Governments of Balkan States take it to mean failure or abandonment of attack on the Dardanelles, result might be far-reaching. To prevent wrong interpretation being placed on the movements of the troops, I suggest their departure be delayed *until our attack is renewed in a*

[1] This should be compared with the telegrams printed at the end of Chapter IX, wherein Admiral de Robeck freely and after 'separate and independent judgment' agreed that the operations were 'wise and practicable.' Also with General D'Amade's account in 'Constantinople et les Dardanelles' (p. 23) of Admiral de Robeck's temper before the action.

'I was sceptical,' writes D'Amade, 'before the conference (on the 17th) of the possibility of forcing the passage. But I modified my opinion in presence of the confidence and perfect serenity of judgment of Admiral de Robeck. My landsman's incompetence bowed with satisfaction before the technical advice of an expert of this standing.'

[2] 'Gallipoli Diary,' p. 40.

few days' time.[1] Meantime, feint of landing on a large scale on several points of the coast of Gallipoli might tend to draw off field-guns from the general action when they are likely to seriously hamper our sweeping operations.

Such was his state of mind on the 21st.

But now occurred the sudden and extraordinary change, the repercussion of which we have witnessed at the Admiralty. On the 22d a Conference was held on board the *Queen Elizabeth*. There were present Admiral de Robeck, Admiral Wemyss, Sir Ian Hamilton, General Birdwood, General Braithwaite and Captain Pollen. Sir Ian Hamilton has recorded of this Conference:—

> The moment we sat down de Robeck told us *he was now quite clear he could not get through without the help of all my troops.*
>
> Before ever we went aboard, Braithwaite, Birdwood and I had agreed that, whatever we landsmen might think, we must leave the seamen to settle their own job, saying nothing for or against land operations or amphibious operations until the sailors themselves turned to us and said they had abandoned the idea of forcing the passage by naval operations alone.
>
> They have done so . . .
>
> So there was no discussion. At once we turned our faces to the land scheme.[2]

It is clear that Admiral de Robeck came to his decision during the afternoon or night of the 21st. It was a far-reaching decision. It put aside altogether the policy of the Government and of the Admiralty, with which, up to this, the Admiral had declared himself in full accord. The plans which had emanated from the Fleet, on which both Admiral and Admiralty had been agreed, were cast to the winds. It withdrew the Fleet from the struggle, and laid the responsibilities of the Navy upon the Army. It committed the Army in the most unfavourable conditions to an enterprise of extreme

[1] My italics.

[2] 'Gallipoli Diary,' p. 41.

hazard and of first magnitude. It was a decision entirely contrary to the whole spirit, and indeed to the explicit terms, of the latest messages Admiral de Robeck had received from the Admiralty *after* the news of the action of March 18. It was outside the scope of the orders with which, on accepting the command, the Admiral had stated he was in full agreement. It is true that the Admiralty Telegram, No. 109, of March 15, had said: 'You must concert any military operations on a large scale which you consider necessary with General Hamilton when he arrives.' But this was not intended to cover, nor did it from its context cover, the total abandonment of the naval attack and the substitution of a purely military effort.

Thus at this Conference on the 22d two grave decisions became operative: first, that the naval attack should be abandoned in favour of a general assault by the Army; and secondly, that the Army should go back to Alexandria to organise and prepare for this attack, although this process would involve at least three weeks' delay. The Army had in fact arrived too late and too ill-organised to deliver its own surprise attack, but in plenty of time by its very presence to tempt the Navy to desist from theirs.

One must, however, make great allowances for the Admiral and for the naval point of view which he represented. To statesmen or soldiers, ships in time of war possess no sentimental value. They are engines of war to be used, risked, and if necessary expended in the common cause and for the general policy of the State. To such minds the life of a soldier was every whit as precious as that of a sailor, and an old battleship marked for the scrap-heap was an instrument of war to be expended in a good cause as readily as artillery ammunition is fired to shelter and support a struggling infantry attack. But to an Admiral of this standing and upbringing, these old ships were sacred. They had been the finest ships afloat in the days when he as a young officer had first set foot upon their decks. The discredit and even disgrace of casting away a ship

was ingrained deeply by years of mental training and outlook. The spectacle of this noble structure on which so many loyalties centred, which was the floating foothold of daily life, foundering miserably beneath the waves, appeared as an event shocking and unnatural in its character. Whereas a layman or soldier might have rejoiced that so important an action as that of March 18 could have been fought with a loss of less than thirty British lives and two or three worthless ships, and that so many valuable conclusions had been attained at such a slender cost, Admiral de Robeck was saddened and consternated to the foundations of his being. These emotions were also present around the Admiralty table in Whitehall.

Full weight must be attached to Admiral de Robeck's reasons for not renewing the attack.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Admiralty.

Sent March 27, 1915, 1.30 a.m. *Received* 4.7 a.m.

First Lord. Secret.

I do not consider check on 18th was decisive, and am still of opinion that a portion of fleet would succeed in entering Sea of Marmora. Nothing has occurred since 21st to alter my intention to press enemy hard until I am in a position to deliver a decisive attack. On 21st I was prepared to go forward irrespective of the Army, as I fully realised that this matter must be carried through to a successful issue regardless of cost, and also because, in view of the military opinion expressed in your 70,[1] and which, if persisted in, would in no wise assist the Navy in their task, I did not anticipate the possibility of military co-operation in the forcing of the Straits, though I have always been of opinion that decisive result would be best

[1] This was the telegram drafted on February 24 by Sir Henry Jackson at the request of the War Office:—

'War Office consider the occupation of the southern end of the Peninsula to the line Suandere-Chana Ovasi is not an obligatory operation for ensuring success of first main object, which is to destroy the permanent batteries.

'Though troops should always be held in readiness to assist in minor operations on both sides of the Straits in order to destroy masked bat-

obtained by a combined operation rather than by either a naval or military force acting alone.

On 22nd, having conferred with General and heard his proposals, I learned that the co-operation of the Army and Navy was considered by him a sound operation of war, and that he was fully prepared to work with the Navy in the forcing of the Dardanelles, but that he could not act before April 14. The plan discussed with General Hamilton, and now in the course of preparation pending your approval of my 256,[1] will effect, in my opinion, decisive and overwhelming results. The original approved plan for forcing the Dardanelles by ships was drawn up on the assumption that gunfire alone was capable of destroying forts. This assumption has been conclusively proved to be wrong when applied to the attacking of open forts by high-velocity guns; for instance, Fort 8 has been frequently bombarded at distant and close ranges, the damage caused is possibly one gun disabled. Shells which hit either expended their destructive power uselessly on the parapet or destroyed some unimportant building in the background of the fort; to obtain direct hits on each gun has been found impracticable, even at ranges of 700 to 800 yards, as was attempted in the case of Forts 3 and 6.[2] One gun in Fort 4 was found loaded and fit for service on February 26, although the fort had been heavily bombarded for two days at long range and at short range. The utmost that can be expected of ships is to dominate the forts to such an extent that gun crews cannot fight the guns; any more permanent disablement could only be carried out with an excessive expenditure of ammunition at point-blank range, the report of opera-

teries and engage enemy forces covering them, our main army can remain in camp at Lemnos till the passage of the Straits is in our hands, when holding Bulair lines may be necessary to stop all supplies reaching the Peninsula.

'You should discuss the whole position with General Birdwood on his arrival before deciding any major operation beyond covering range of ships' guns and report conclusion arrived at.'

[1] This is the same telegram as 818. 818 is its wireless number. 256 the number in the Admiral's log book.

[2] These conclusions will be examined in the next chapter in the light of the subsequent analysis of the firing and actual conditions of the Defences.

tions carried out against Tsing Tau recently received strengthens this opinion. Conclusions drawn from the attack on the cupola forts at Antwerp by heavy howitzers are quite misleading when applied to the case described above. To engage Forts 7 and 8 at close range entails ships coming under fire of forts at the Narrows, these have therefore to be silenced with consequent heavy expenditure of ammunition which cannot be spared. Further, wear of the old guns is causing me some anxiety; on the 18th there were several premature bursts of common shell, and guns were out of action from time to time. It would be the worst policy to carry out bombardment which could not be brought to a decisive result. To destroy forts, therefore, it is necessary to land demolishing parties. To cover these parties at the Narrows is a task General Hamilton is not prepared to undertake, and I fully concur in his view. To carry the demolition out by surprise is impracticable. The mine menace being even greater than anticipated, the number of torpedo tubes, by all reports, having been added to, combined with the fact that they cannot be destroyed, materially increases the difficulties of clearing passage for the Fleet, which has to be carried out while the forts are kept silenced by gunfire. The result of naval action alone might, in my opinion, be a brilliant success or quite indecisive. Success depends largely on the effect that the appearance of the Fleet off Constantinople would produce on the Turkish army, which appears to control the situation in Turkey at present, and which is itself dominated by the Germans, but if the Turkish army is undismayed by the advent of the Fleet into the Sea of Marmora and the Straits are closed behind it, the length of time which ships can operate, as indicated in your 86 and 88, and maintain themselves in that sea depends almost entirely on the number of colliers and ammunition which can accompany the Fleet, and as the passage will be contested, the percentage of large unprotected ships which can be expected to get through is small. The passage of supply ships for the Fleet through the Dardanelles with the forts still intact is a problem to which I can see no practical solution. In such a case it would be vital for the Army to occupy the Peninsula, which would open the Strait, as guns on Asiatic side can be dominated from the European shore sufficiently to permit ships to pass through. The landing of an army of the size contem-

plated in the face of strenuous opposition is, in my opinion, an operation requiring the assistance of all naval forces available. A landing at Bulair would not necessarily cause Turks to abandon Peninsula, and there could be no two opinions that a Fleet intact outside the Dardanelles can do this better than the remains of a Fleet inside with little ammunition. With Gallipoli Peninsula held by our Army, and Squadron through Dardanelles our success would be assured. The delay possibly of a fortnight will allow co-operation, which would really prove factor that will reduce length of time necessary to complete the campaign in Sea of Marmora and occupy Constantinople.

It will be seen that there is a distinct discrepancy between the statements of Admiral de Robeck and Sir Ian Hamilton. The Admiral represents that his change of mind was the result of 'proposals' made to him by the General, whereas the General states explicitly, 'The moment we sat down de Robeck told us he was now quite clear he could not get through without the help of all my troops.' The probable explanation is as follows: Until the evening of the 21st the Admiral thought that the Army were not authorised to storm any part of the Peninsula, but only to occupy the Bulair lines after the Fleet had forced the passage. As soon as he learned that the Army were free to act in any direction, and that Sir Ian Hamilton was ready, if called on by him, to descend in full force upon the Southern end of the Peninsula, he immediately abandoned the naval attack, and invited the Army to open the passage.

Whatever may be the explanation, the arguments of Admiral de Robeck's telegram were decisive. At the Admiralty they consolidated all the oppositions to action. At the front they paralysed the Fleet. Some days later, after Sir Ian Hamilton had received a copy of my long telegram of January 24 and others from Lord Kitchener, he sent the following message to the Admiral:—

March 30.

I had already communicated outline of our plan to Lord Kitchener, and am pushing on preparations as fast as possible.

War Office still seems to cherish the hope that you may break through without landing troops. Therefore as regards yourself I think wisest procedure will be to push on systematically though not recklessly in attack on Forts. It is always possible that opposition may suddenly crumple up. If you did succeed be sure to have light cruisers enough to see me through my military attack, in the event of that being after all necessary. If you do not succeed then I think we quite understand one another.

The Admiral, however, remained immovable.

* * * * *

On the 24th Sir Ian Hamilton and his staff sailed for Alexandria, whither all the transports carrying troops through the Mediterranean were directed. On this day also on the enemy's side an important step was taken. General Liman von Sanders had hitherto been the head of the German military mission to Turkey, but had not exercised any executive command. The distress and the apprehensions of the Turks, and the crisis of the operations, induced Enver Pasha on March 24 to summon General Liman von Sanders to Constantinople and to place in his hands the entire control of the Turkish forces available for the defence of the Peninsula. General von Sanders assumed the command on the 26th. 'The distribution,' he writes, 'of the available five divisions for both sides of the Marmora which had obtained until the 26th March had to be completely altered. They had stood until this according to quite other principles, scattered along the whole coast like the frontier guards of the good old times. The enemy on landing would have found resistance everywhere, but no forces or reserves to make a strong and energetic counter attack.'[1]

* * * * *

It was with grief that I announced to the Cabinet on the

[1] 'Liman von Sanders,' pp. 81–2.

23d the refusal of the Admiral and the Admiralty to continue the naval attack, and that it must, at any rate for the time being, be abandoned. Since the crisis of August, 1914, many undertakings had been given on behalf of the Royal Navy, and hitherto all had been made good. It was now again open to the Prime Minister, to Lord Kitchener, to the Cabinet, if they wished, to withdraw from the whole enterprise and to cover the failure by the seizure of Alexandretta. We had lost fewer men killed and wounded than were often incurred in a trench raid on the Western front, and no vessel of the slightest value had been sunk. I could not have complained of such a decision, however strongly I might have argued against it. But there was no necessity to argue. Lord Kitchener was always splendid when things went wrong. Confident, commanding, magnanimous, he made no reproaches. In a few brief sentences he assumed the burden and declared he would carry the operations through by military force. So here again there was no discussion: the agreement of the Admiral and the General on the spot, and the declaration of Lord Kitchener, carried all before them. No formal decision to make a land attack was even noted in the records of the Cabinet or the War Council. When we remember the prolonged discussions and study which had preceded the resolve to make the naval attack, with its limited risk and cost, the silent plunge into this vast military adventure must be regarded as an extraordinary episode. Three months before how safe, how sound, how sure would this decision have been. But now!

When Lord Kitchener undertook to storm the Gallipoli Peninsula with the Army, he was under the impression that a week would suffice to prepare and begin the operation, and that meanwhile Admiral de Robeck would continue a steady naval pressure upon the Turks which might reveal at any moment the weakness of their marine defences. He suggested the following telegram being sent to the Admiral. which he wrote out for me:—

Undoubtedly silenced guns should be destroyed and the forts demolished, and for this purpose the Admiral should call upon the army authorities to provide landing parties of considerable force whenever necessary for the purpose. It is important to keep up the bombardment, and all attempts to pass the Narrows by ships. Once ships are through, the Gallipoli military position ceases to be of importance.[1]

He was astonished at the date of the military attack having to be put off so late as April 14, and he sent there and then from the Cabinet room the following telegram to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

March 23.

I am informed you consider the 14th April as about date for commencing military operations if fleet have not forced the Dardanelles by then. I think you had better know at once that I consider any such postponement as far too long, and should like to know how soon you will act on shore.

The General's reply was unanswerable.

Sir Ian Hamilton to Lord Kitchener.

I have not yet named any date, as I considered that this mainly depended on the arrival of the 29th Division (see paragraph 2 of your formal instructions to me). The foresight of your instructions appeals to me with double force now that I am at close quarters with the problem. . . .

Paragraph 2 ran as follows:—

2. Before any serious undertaking is carried out in the Gallipoli Peninsula, all the British forces detailed for the expedition should be assembled, so that their full weight can be thrown in.

There was no more to be said. When Lord Kitchener had reversed the decision of February 16 to send the 29th Division, when he had countermanded and consequently dispersed

[1] Not sent in this form. The substance was comprised in other messages.

its transports, when he had deliberately left the issue in suspense until March 10, when he had allowed the division to be embarked otherwise than in order for battle, he had tied his own hands inextricably. He had no choice now but to wait for weeks in the face of ever-accumulating dangers and difficulties, or to abandon the enterprise. This latter solution, however, he at no time entertained. On the contrary he braced himself resolutely for the effort, and events continued to drift steadily forward.

He wrote to me on the 25th:—

As Fitzgerald explained, we are pushing on preparations for land operations. In the meantime I hope the Navy will continue to engage the forts as vigorously as possible, and thus induce the Turks to expend their ammunition.

A further telegram was also received from the Admiral on the 25th, in which he said:—

In preparing the decisive effort in conjunction with Army . . . it is proposed to resume a vigorous offensive as soon as weather permits, having following objects:

Firstly, completely clearing the area in which squadron must manœuvre in order to cover the mine-sweeping vessels operating in Kephez minefield.

Secondly, with the assistance of aeroplanes, systematic reconnoitring both shores in order to locate and destroy gun-fire of howitzers and other concealed guns and carry out indirect attack on Chanak Forts by *Queen Elizabeth*, with aeroplanes spotting.

In Gulf of Xeros French squadron will endeavour to attack Gallipoli and camps near Bulair with their aircraft.

I still hoped that the continuance of the naval pressure, even within the limits now prescribed, would yield results which would encourage the Admiral to renew his attack, and thus perhaps spare the Army the dreaded ordeal.

Armed with Lord Kitchener's letter and this telegram, I wrote again to Fisher:—

Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.

March 25, 1915.

The Prime Minister seemed disappointed last night that we had not sent de Roebeck a definite order to go on with his attack at the first opportunity, and he expressed his agreement with the telegram to that effect which I drafted yesterday morning. I explained that the gale was rendering all operations impracticable, and that nothing would be lost by a full interchange of views, such as would be effected by my 'Personal and Secret' of yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Balfour also pointed out to me that de Robeck's 818 shows that he anticipates getting through if he tries, and that his anxiety now is for his communications after he has got through. This anxiety I am convinced is not well founded. The arrival of four or five ships in the Marmora would decide the issue.

My own feeling is that de Robeck should try to clear the Kephez minefield and to smash the forts at the Narrows, according to our plans, and that any question of going further could only arise after very marked success had been achieved in the above task.

This is not a very great extension of what he proposes in this telegram, just received; but it means that we have not abandoned our undertaking, or set definite limits to our efforts, and that we shall press on methodically but resolutely with it, and hold ourselves free and ready to profit by any success that may be reaped.

Meanwhile the Army will go ahead with their preparations to begin at the earliest moment.

I hope we shall be together in this. There is no need for any action till we hear further.

On March 27 I telegraphed approving the course which Admiral de Robeck had determined to adopt. However, he did not in the event pursue even the limited operations of which he had spoken in his telegram of the 25th. His energies and those of his staff soon became absorbed in the preparation of the comprehensive and complicated plans necessary for the landing of the army. The *Queen Elizabeth* never fired a

gun, and all ships remained inactive against the enemy for another month. From this slough I was not able to lift the operations. All the negative forces began to band themselves together.

Henceforward the defences of the Dardanelles were to be reinforced by an insurmountable mental barrier. A wall of crystal, utterly immovable, began to tower up in the Narrows, and against this wall of inhibition no weapon could be employed. The 'No' principle had become established in men's minds, and nothing could ever eradicate it. Never again could I marshal the Admiralty War Group and the War Council in favour of resolute action. Never again could I move the First Sea Lord. 'No' had settled down for ever on our councils, crushing with its deadening weight what I shall ever believe was the hope of the world. Vain was it for Admiral de Robeck a month later, inspired by the ardent Keyes,[1] to offer to renew the naval attack. His hour had passed. I could never lift the 'No' that had descended, and soon I was myself to succumb. Still vainer was it for Admiral Wemyss, when he succeeded de Robeck, to submit the Keyes plans and his own resolute convictions to the new Board of Admiralty. Vain was it for Keyes in October to resign his appointment as Chief of the Staff and hasten personally to London to plead with Lord Kitchener and my successor for permission to attack. 'No' had won, with general assent and measureless ruin. Never again did the British Fleet renew the attack upon the Narrows which in pursuance of their orders they had begun on March 18, and which they then confidently expected to continue after a brief interval. Instead, they waited for nine months the spectators of the sufferings, the immense losses and imperishable glories of the Army, always hoping that their hour of intervention would come, always hoping for their turn

[1] Commodore Keyes, afterwards Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, commander of the Dover Patrol and leader of the attack upon Zeebrugge, 1918.

to run every risk and make every sacrifice, until in the end they had the sorrow and mortification of taking the remains of the Army off and steaming away under the cloak of darkness from the scene of irretrievable failure.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CASE FOR PERSEVERANCE AND DECISION

Lifting the Veil at the Dardanelles—The Inner Defences—The Intermediate Defences—The Minefields—Their Combination—Its Vulnerability—The Turkish Ammunition Shortage—British Naval Ammunition Supplies and Reserves—Effects of Gun Fire on the Fleet—Defence by Torpedo-tubes—Defence by Mines Moored and Floating—The New Mine-Sweepers—Deficiencies Remedied—Chances of the Attack—Various Opinions—A German View—The Hard Alternative—General Liman von Sanders's Account—Formation of the Fifth Turkish Army—Its Labours During April—Surprise and Intensity—The Need of Shells—The Terrible Shortage—Lord Kitchener's Grim Dilemma—His Failure to Choose.

UP to this point the tale has been told almost entirely in the light of the knowledge of each moment of action. In this chapter we may lift the veil which hangs across the Dardanelles, which separates the contending forces, and divides the present from the future. We feel our own injuries, we count our losses. What are those of the enemy? We are oppressed by our difficulties. What are his? The shining waters of the Straits, the rugged ridges of Gallipoli smile or frown inscrutably upon us. What secrets do they hold? What terrors have they in store? What is the true value at this moment in March 1915, of these defences before which our Fleet has recoiled, or against which our Army is about to be hurled? In what did their strength and weakness lie? What did the Turks think about them and the prospects of continuing the defence? What did their German masters think? What was the opinion of the enemy commanders and the feeling of their troops? What harm had we done them? How many effective guns had they and how many shells for each? How many torpedo-tubes and torpedoes? How many mines?

What were, on the other hand, our own maximum resources had they all been made available? All these questions can now be answered with considerable exactness and certitude.

The Inner Defences of the Dardanelles consisted of ten forts and batteries of varying size and power equally disposed on the European and Asiatic shores, and mounting twenty long modern and fifty-two old short guns of position, together with various smaller pieces. All these guns were mounted in open batteries, were obvious, and were scarcely at all protected.

The old guns would have been effective in firing on a fleet endeavouring to run through the Straits, which at the Narrows are only one mile across. But only the long guns could be used in preventing the fleet from coming to close quarters; and once the fleet had come to close quarters it could certainly overwhelm the batteries and drive the gunners from their posts. It may therefore be said that the gun armament of the forts was limited for all practical purposes to their twenty long primary guns.

Had this been all, the problem would have been comparatively simple. But the forts were themselves protected from close attack by the Intermediate Defences. These defences we knew before the war consisted of fourteen medium modern guns of from 4-inch to 6-inch calibre, mounted in batteries on one side of the Straits or the other, and of three or more batteries of movable field guns. On their entry into the war the Turks realised the necessity of improving the defences of the Straits. They had previously prepared plans providing for the erection of additional coast batteries, for the substitution of modern for old-type guns, for the improvement of fire control and ammunition supply, for the increase in the number and calibre of their minefields and mobile batteries, and for additional minefields, torpedo-tubes, searchlights, range-finders and improved electrical communication for fire-direction and control. Progress was made in all these directions between November and February. These measures were not

taken in consequence of our bombardment of November 3, but of the natural policy and prearranged programme appropriate to a state of war. But it is probable that this bombardment imparted a stimulus and acceleration to all these measures, and from that point of view it is now seen to be open to criticism.

By the time the Outer Forts had fallen, the Intermediate Defences had developed in various important ways. The two 6-inch guns at Dardanos (No. 8) were increased to five, a new battery of three 6-inch guns had been erected on the opposite shore, and eighteen 8·2-inch mortars (or short howitzers) and thirty-two 6-inch howitzers—very serious new factors—were placed in concealed positions, one-third on the European and two-thirds on the Asiatic side. The object of these howitzers was to compel ships attacking the forts at long range to keep on the move and consequently to destroy the accuracy of their fire. In addition to the gun defences, there were the minefields. At the beginning of the war, five lines of mines had been laid across the narrow part of the Straits, comprising a total of 191 mines. Between November and the beginning of the naval attack, four additional lines of mines had been laid in the Kephez area; and on February 26, immediately after the fall of the Outer Forts, a further line of mines was laid at the Narrows. Thus at this moment there were ten lines of mines in position containing under 400 mines in all. All these were 'contact' mines, that is to say, they exploded on being struck by a vessel, and none of them were 'observation' mines fired by electricity from the shore when a vessel is seen to be in their proximity.

Thus the defences with which our Fleet was confronted after the fall of the Outer Forts and on the morrow of March 18 consisted of four factors—forts, mobile howitzers, minefield batteries and minefields—all well combined but all mutually dependent. The minefields blocked the passage of the Straits and kept the Fleet beyond their limits. The minefield bat-

teries prevented the sweeping of the minefields. The forts protected the minefield batteries by keeping battleships at a distance with their long guns. The mobile howitzers kept the battleships on the move and increased the difficulty of overcoming the forts. So long as all four factors stood together, the defences constituted a formidable obstruction. But not one could stand by itself, and if one were broken down, its fall entailed the collapse of the others.

The forts by themselves could not withstand the Fleet. They were vulnerable to indirect fire from over the Peninsula. They could be dominated and greatly injured by direct fire from inside the Straits below the minefields. Lastly, they could be forced to exhaust their ammunition in conflict with the Fleet. The amount of ammunition possessed by the Turks is therefore cardinal.

The important guns on which the defence depended were as follows:—

Five 14-inch (two of which were put out of action early on the 18th by a single shot), fourteen 9·4-inch, eight 6-inch quick-firing, eighteen 8·2-inch mortars and thirty-two 6-inch howitzers.

After March 18 the 14-inch guns had between them, according to the Turkish War Office, 271 rounds; and according to Djevad Pasha, the Turkish Commander, 244 rounds. The eleven 9·4-inch had 868 rounds. The eight 6-inch quick-firing had 371 rounds. The eighteen 8·2-inch mortars had approximately 720 rounds. The thirty-two 6-inch howitzers had 3,706 rounds. Both the 6-inch guns and the 6-inch howitzers had fired away half their ammunition. A third set of figures, resting on the authority of the Commander of a Turkish artillery battalion in actual charge of the main group of forts, gives the very much lower total of 36 rounds for each 14-inch gun and 29 rounds for each 9·4-inch gun.

In addition to this quasi-modern ammunition, there were further considerable supplies of old, black powder shells

which no doubt could have been used, though with reduced effect.

It was claimed by the Turks after the Armistice in 1918 that enough ammunition remained for the important guns to fight two more actions similar to that of March 18. For the smaller guns, fixed and mobile, of which there were about seventy, the supplies enabled a longer resistance to be maintained. But as will be seen later a large and increasing proportion of these guns and their ammunition were, in the absence of any naval attack, transferred from the defences of the Straits to the Turkish Army from the end of April onward, and the mobile defences of the Straits were in consequence seriously reduced.

What on the other hand was the position in regard to the Fleet? On March 23 I called by minute for a report on the Naval Shell position and prospects. The report showed that our reserves were practically the same as those with which we had begun the war. No inroad whatever had been made upon them. These reserves were about to be augmented rapidly as the result of the large orders placed on the outbreak of hostilities. Henceforward our current *monthly* production in practically every nature of gun would exceed the *entire expenditure since the beginning of the war*. For instance out of 56,000 rounds of 12-inch ammunition possessed by the Fleet in August, 1914, 3,480 had been fired in the eight months of war and an exactly similar quantity had already been received from the factories, while the monthly deliveries now arriving were over 3,700 rounds. Out of 31,000 9·2-inch shells available at the outbreak, 1,228 had been fired in eight months and the monthly delivery was 1,720. Most remarkable of all was the 6-inch. Out of 322,000 rounds at the outbreak, 13,000 had been expended since the beginning of the war, 41,000 had been received, and the future monthly deliveries were estimated at 44,000. Compared to totals of this character the expenditure on the Dardanelles was trivial. Up to and including the action of March 18 we had fired only 1,101 12-inch,

749 9·2-inch and 5,345 6-inch. We could without inconvenience or imprudence have fired three or four times these amounts during the month of April alone. The wear of the guns was the only limiting factor.

It would appear certain that a sustained prosecution of the naval attack would have exposed the scarcity of the Turkish heavy ammunition within a comparatively short time. If the forts had sought to husband their fire, the battleships could have advanced to the edge of the minefield and engaged the minefield batteries at close quarters. Under this cover the sweepers could have attacked the minefields, and this prospect must have compelled the forts to fire or submit to their essential protection being destroyed. Once the minefield was swept, the gunnery of the forts was not strong enough or well enough organised to prevent the Fleet advancing to attack them at decisive ranges. Either the exhaustion or the husbanding of the ammunition would have eliminated one of the essential factors on which the whole system of defence depended. But the question arises, could the Fleet have stood against the fire of the forts long enough to wear them down without itself incurring grievous injury?

An officer of distinction who filled throughout the whole of the operations a position of high responsibility has written:—

Having spent many hours under fire in the Straits at long range and short range, and seen vessels hit by every kind of gun and howitzer, I felt—and still feel—very strongly that gunfire alone would never have stopped even the oldest pre-Dreadnought battleship from forcing the Straits. They were well protected against projectiles fired at the range at which the forts were engaged, and the plunging fire of the howitzers, apart from its inaccuracy, was not serious. The projectiles invariably broke up on contact without doing vital injury. It is true that they made yawning holes in the upper deck and inconvenienced us from a habitability point of view after an action; but the slight casualty lists prove what very slight damage was inflicted when the personnel were kept at action

stations. Some of the older ships were weak over their casemates, as plunging fire was not foreseen when they were designed; but chain cables flaked above the casemates successfully broke up the projectiles.

* * * * *

No factor exercised a more deterrent effect upon the attackers than the possibility and alleged existence of large numbers of torpedo-tubes on each side of the Straits. We now know exactly what this menace amounted to. From January, 1915, onward there were three 18-inch torpedo-tubes with two torpedoes each, mounted on the pier at Kilid Bahr. One of these tubes could fire right across the Narrows, and the other two less than half-way. Twenty minutes were required to reload the tubes, which could thus have only been fired once during the passage of the Fleet. The position of these tubes on the pier at Kilid Bahr could be seen by a ship advancing up the Straits before the position at which torpedoes would be discharged was reached. So exposed was this position that no great difficulty would have been experienced in attacking the tubes and destroying them by gunfire at short range before the torpedoes could be discharged. The torpedo-tubes were therefore too few, too visible, and too far up the Straits to constitute at any time a serious obstruction to the passage of the Fleet. Moreover, on March 18 a shell hit the pier at Kilid Bahr and prevented the use of the tubes for ten days. Had Admiral de Robeck determined to renew the attack, he might safely have exclaimed with Admiral Farragut on a famous occasion 'Damn the torpedoes!'

The ten lines of moored mines which formed the minefields comprised in all 324 mines. The mine-layer *Nousret* had on March 18 thirty-six mines ready for laying. Otherwise there was no reserve of mines to fill any breach made in the minefields by the sweepers. No mines could be made in Turkey, and none were obtained from Germany until after Bulgaria entered the war at the end of 1915.

Another serious anxiety was the possibility that large numbers of floating mines would be thrown into the Straits while the fleet was actually committed to the passage, and drifting down with the current would cause decisive injury. This anxiety was heightened by the fact that the ships lost on the 18th were for some time believed to have been blown up by floating mines. The actual facts are as follows:—

There were in February, 1915, only about thirty or forty floating mines at the Dardanelles. Nineteen of these mines were released in the month of operations preceding March 18. They did no damage of any kind, either floating harmlessly to sea or being intercepted by our picket-boats. On March 18 a small steamer, the *Bulair*, was waiting just below Nagara throughout the bombardment with about twenty floating mines on board. None were, however, released during the action. These twenty mines and about twenty others of a somewhat different type[1] therefore constituted the extent of the danger from this cause to which the Fleet would have been exposed if it had attacked at any time from April to August.

Such was the margin of resources upon which this complicated defence rested at this juncture. It could not be augmented for many weeks, and was not, in fact, augmented for many months. Scarcely any military supplies, least of all of heavy ammunition, could be transported from the Central Powers to Turkey until after Bulgaria entered the war, and no effective facilities for making ammunition or mines existed or were found capable of being improvised in Turkey.

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Up till and including the action of March 18 the force of mine-sweepers provided by the Admiralty was—it must be freely admitted—inadequate both in numbers and efficiency. There were only available twenty-one trawlers, whose speed

[1] Resembling the periscopes of submarines.

was too slow for sweeping against the current. These were manned by fishermen, unsupported by trained and disciplined naval personnel. By the middle of March it was realised that large numbers of sweepers fast enough to sweep against the current, cutting up the mines as they advanced, and manned by highly trained and disciplined crews, were needed. After March 18 these crews were available in large numbers of volunteers from the crews of the sunken battleships; and by the end of April, thirty specially selected trawlers and eight fleet sweepers, capable of sweeping at 14-knots speed, had been sent out from England. In addition, twenty-four destroyers, far more efficient than the trawlers, had been fitted and trained as sweepers. Thus by the end of April the sweeping force available had been thoroughly and scientifically organised and consisted of eighty vessels, nearly half of which were capable of sweeping upstream at 14 knots. This reorganised and incomparably superior sweeping force was never employed against the Kephez minefield. On the only occasion on which they were used, namely, in the last week of April for sweeping out the bombarding areas in the Straits up to 8,000 yards from the forts, they achieved complete success in daylight and with practically no loss. Whether these eighty sweepers thus reorganised would have succeeded in clearing a passage through the Kephez minefield by repeated night attacks and still have retained a reserve sufficient to sweep the Fleet into the Marmora, can never be decided. But the Turkish difficulties in controlling and directing their fire at night on even the few slow trawlers used in the earlier stages make it not unreasonable to suppose that success might have been obtained by the new sweepers, especially if one or two battleships were risked to engage the minefield batteries on Suandere and Kephez at short range close behind the sweepers.

* * * * *

To sum up:—After March 18, apart from old ammunition, only some two days' ammunition was left for the heavy guns

(40 to 60 rounds per gun for the five 14-inch guns and 30 to 85 rounds per gun for the eleven 9·4-inch guns). The permanent silencing of the forts inevitably entailed the subsequent successful sweeping of the minefields, for the repair of which there were no reserves of mines. The menace of the three torpedo-tubes was practically non-existent. The menace of the twenty floating mines was not material. Half the ammunition of the medium howitzers and minefield batteries had already been expended. On the other hand, all the deficiencies in the Fleet which had been revealed since the outset of the operations were remediable in the light of experience. All were in process of being remedied during March. All were remedied during April. The Fleet sweeping force available for the attack had been increased fourfold in numbers, nearly doubled in speed, and immeasurably improved in efficiency and organisation. Ample supplies of ammunition were available for the *Queen Elizabeth* for long-range indirect fire upon the forts.[1] The general supplies of ammunition available for the Fleet were sufficient to prolong the attack on successive days until the ammunition of the defence was exhausted many times over. During April an effective aerial observation system had been organised. Large reinforcements of aeroplanes were on their way or had arrived. An aerodrome on Tenedos Island enabled aeroplanes to be used in addition to seaplanes.

It is not possible to prove finally whether or no success would have attended the renewal of the naval attack under these improved conditions. Allowance must be made for the intervention of the unexpected. War lies largely in the region of chance. Those who are committed to the 'No' principle, may summon chance to their aid to multiply their difficulties and fortify their fears. Those who hoped, and who wished to dare can only dwell upon the solid facts which are now for the

[1] In all she had fired 252 15-inch shells up to and including March 18.

first time available. But these facts, in the absence of action, can never be conclusive.

Still chances on one side may be matched by chances on the other. What reason, for instance, was there to anticipate a repetition of the losses of March 18 in a subsequent attack? We now know that the sole cause of these losses was the laying of twenty mines in an area which the Fleet had considered already swept. But with the improved sweeping arrangements, this danger would not have recurred. The danger from floating mines we now know to have been practically non-existent, but in any case, even viewed as seriously as it was at the time, it could have been coped with by laying lines of nets and by the activities of the picket-boats. There was therefore no reason, even with the knowledge of the time, not to speak of after-knowledge, why the attack of March 18 should not have been renewed under vastly improved conditions before the end of April and pressed continuously, bombarding and sweeping by night and day, for two or three or four days in succession. And if during these efforts any one of the essential elements of the defence had failed, the whole obstacle which stood between us and the entry of the Marmora would have been removed. Before April 25, when the Army was ready to attack, certainly long before the German U-Boat arrived in the second week of May, the Fleet might have been in the Marmora, thus compromising fatally from both sides the Turkish communications both by sea and land, across the isthmus of Bulair. It would then have been in a position to attack all the principal forts in reverse at close quarters, without being exposed either to the danger of mines or of the fire of heavy guns. Irrespective of political reactions at Constantinople, irrespective of anything that might have happened in Bulgaria or in Greece, the fate of the Turkish Army gathered on the Gallipoli Peninsula was then certain. The larger the Army gathered so hurriedly to oppose Sir Ian Hamilton's threatened landing, the more certain and the more speedy its starvation.

No escape would have been possible except to the Asiatic shore in such small boats as had escaped destruction during the passage of the Fleet.

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These considerations of fact may be reinforced by others of authority.

Enver Pasha said during the war:—

If the English had only had the courage to rush more ships through the Dardanelles, they could have got to Constantinople; but their delay enabled us thoroughly to fortify the Peninsula and in six weeks' time we had taken down there over two hundred Austrian Skoda guns.

After the war many Turkish and German opinions were collected.

Admiral Souchon, of *Goeben* fame, thought that the Allied Fleet would get through. His Turkish Chief of Staff differed from him in this, but observed: 'If the British Fleet had succeeded in forcing the Dardanelles and arrived off Constantinople at any time, the Turks would have endeavoured to make peace; their hands would have been forced; a revolution against Enver Pasha was imminent before the war, and this would have broken out if the Allied Fleet got through.'

The German Naval Lieut.-Commander Balzer[1] said:—

'Berlin was quite certain that the British Fleet could push through the Dardanelles after March 18, as the Turks had practically exhausted their ammunition, some guns had none. The Germans tried to organise shell factories in Constantinople, but lack of machinery made it very difficult and the output was small. The mines were not considered to be an adequate defence since, if the fortifications were mastered, the

[1] A.D.C. to the representative of the Minister of Marine at Berlin, where he saw and made précis of all past and present naval reports relating to the Dardanelles; an informant described as 'a clever, capable German officer, who had studied Turkish politics closely, and had definite and reasonable opinions.'

mines could be swept.' In answer to the question: 'What would have happened if the Allied Fleet had succeeded in forcing the Narrows on March 18?' he replied: 'I have no doubt whatever that Turkey would have made peace. There would have been a revolution. The appearance of ships before Constantinople would have been sufficient. Constantinople *is* Turkey. There were no troops to speak of in Constantinople.'

Djevad Pasha, the Turkish Military Commander-in-Chief at the Dardanelles, did not think that decisive results would have followed from the entry of the Fleet into the Marmora. 'Unless the attack of March 18 had been accompanied by a landing and advance on land, I do not consider any advantages would have been obtained.' He added: 'A combined naval attack and landing there (? then) might have been successful. I had only three regiments altogether on that date for the defences of the Peninsula and Dardanelles. After March 18, when there was no renewal of the attacks, steps were gradually taken to improve the defences as far as possible. . . .'

His Chief of Staff, Colonel Salaheddin (considered to be a very capable Turkish soldier), said that the primary defence of the Dardanelles was the mines. As long as these were in place he did not consider it possible for the Straits to be forced. Leaving the mines out of the question, the forts had ammunition left for at least two more attacks on the same scale. If the ships had pressed on and tried to rush the Straits, he considered it possible that the volume of fire at close range from the ships might force the gun crews in the forts to take cover and so allow the ships to get through. The forts, however, would not be destroyed and would have been available to prevent supplies and store ships getting up to the Fleet in the Sea of Marmora. He added: 'If the Fleet had passed up the Straits and the Army had been landed at Bulair, the Turkish Army on the Peninsula would have had to capitulate.'

Captain Serri, of the Turkish Artillery (described as 'a very well trained and capable artillery officer, quite frank in his opinions'), said: 'I was in Fort Hamidieh on March 18, 1915. I expected that the attack would be renewed and, owing to the shortage of ammunition, I personally thought that the Fleet would succeed in getting through the Straits. . . . I do not consider that the morale of the troops in the forts was affected by the attack. The men were in good spirits.' And again two days later he declared that it was his firm conviction on March 18, 1915, that the Fleet would succeed in forcing the passage of the Dardanelles, as there was very little ammunition left. But the guns of all batteries would have been left practically intact, and it would have been a difficult matter to pass provision ships, colliers, etc., through after the Fleet had passed.

The Signal Officer in Fort Dardanos (8) during the attack said he expected a fresh attack next day and that the ships would get through. The First Lieutenant of the Turkish ship *Hamidieh* said: 'I had no doubt personally that the British Fleet could get through on March 18 or very soon after. When the attack was given up on the 18th, it was commonly said that the English had only gone home to tea and that they would start again as soon as they had had breakfast on the following morning.'

The Turkish War Office stated, *inter alia*:—

After the attack on March 18, in spite of the shortage of ammunition and casualties which had been suffered by some batteries in men and guns, it was confidently felt (*a*) that the contact mines were sound, (*b*) that the shore batteries would be able to defend the minefields, and (*c*) that the Turkish Fleet would be able to deal effectively with such ships as managed to pass the Narrows.

They also stated: 'It is impossible to estimate the situation which would have arisen if the Allied Fleet had forced their way past the forts, past the minefields, and entered the

Sea of Marmora. However, if the British Fleet had attacked land transport from the direction of Bulair and at the same time from the Gulf of Xeros, a very difficult situation would undoubtedly have arisen. It would have increased enormously the difficulty of transport between the Asiatic and European coasts, and also in the Bosphorus and Marmora. Even in such circumstances as these, the Turkish situation would not have been essentially changed *during a fortnight.*[1] The 5th Army could have held every attack which could have taken place *during the fortnight* by using its ammunition and supplies with great care.'

I have myself through the kindness of a friend obtained the opinion of Major Endres, a German officer who had served on the Turkish General Staff during the previous Balkan war, and who was during this critical period Chief of the General Staff to the First Turkish Army (General von der Goltz). Major Endres has written a book on the Turkish share in the Great War. He had the courtesy to send me the following replies to a series of questions:—

Reply to Questionnaire.

1*st Question: During the purely naval attacks by the British from February* 18 *to the end of March, what did you consider at the time was the most critical moment?*

Answer: The situation was most critical for the Turks immediately after March 18. The Naval attack had, it is true, been repulsed, but only, as far as I can see, because the Allies were unwilling to incur further casualties. If on the 19th or 20th a fresh attack with all available forces had been made, it would probably have succeeded.

The battle casualties of the Turks in personnel were not very great, and amounted only to a few hundred men, and the forts and batteries too, though damaged, were not out of action, but the ammunition supply was much reduced and would not have sufficed to repel a second naval attack on a large scale.

[1] My italics.

2nd Question: Do you know of any telegrams or messages from the Germans in Constantinople to the Government in Berlin, pointing out that the situation was very critical, referring to the difficulties of ammunition, and asking for support in one form or another?

Answer: Such requests were to my knowledge sent in October and November, 1914. The condition of the Dardanelles in November, 1914, was hopeless. No ammunition, not a modern gun, only a few mines and bad ones at that. I had at that time inspected the entire fortifications with Excellence Liman and expressed the opinion that it would be possible for the British to reach Constantinople in merchantmen. Against an energetic naval attack in November the Turks would have been defenceless.

Whether, after February, 1915, urgent requests for support were sent I do not know. However, I believe this to be most probable as the Turks had no factory capable of turning out munitions in sufficient quantities.

3rd Question: How much ammunition for the heavy guns was there in the forts, or in any one of the forts, after the attack of March 18?

Answer: I am not in a position to give detailed figures. I know, however, that the ammunition supply was so short that it would not have sufficed for a second engagement on a large scale.

4th Question: What do you think would have been the prospects if the naval attack had been resumed in April and pressed with vigour day after day?

Answer: In April an energetic naval attack could have been made with the prospect of succeeding, although the work of improving the batteries was already completed and fresh munitions had been *partially* brought up. The sooner the second naval attack had taken place, the more certain would success have been assured. I would estimate the chances of success as follows:—

November and December	Quite easy and sure.
January	Somewhat more difficult.

February and first half of March	Difficult but possible if prepared to incur heavy losses.
Immediately after March 18	Certain success provided determination was shown.
April	Same as January. With several attacks pressed with vigour day after day certain success.
May onward . . .	Difficulties would have been on the increase.

5th Question: Supposing a number of British battleships had got into the Marmora so as to command the Isthmus of Bulair from both sides, how long would it have been possible for the Turkish Army on the Gallipoli Peninsula to hold out?

Answer: For myself, I have the conviction that the presence of several British battleships in the Sea of Marmora would have rendered the defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula impossible. From certain points in the Sea of Marmora it is possible, even with guns of flat trajectory, to command the Turkish hill positions, which were well protected from the Ægean Sea, so that after a week, resistance would have been at an end. Also because the concealed Turkish artillery could have been silenced, munition and food supply stopped, and the transport of Turkish forces from the Asiatic shore rendered impossible. For instance, the 11th Turkish Division was transported just in time across the Dardanelles from Chanakale to Gallipoli in barges during the nights following their victory over the French at Jenischehir, on April 29.

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Again no positive conclusions can be drawn from such expressions of opinion however instructed, however sincere. But after all in war one does not expect to have to deal with guaranteed certainties. Even ordinary life and business involve the encountering of unknown factors and require some effort of the imagination, some stress of soul, to overcome them.

With the knowledge we possessed at the time I had no doubt, as the Admiralty telegrams show, that the military risks far outweighed the naval risks, and that the military cost in soldiers' lives would far exceed the cost in sailors' lives. We suspected at the time the weakness and critical condition of the Turkish defence against the Fleet as now revealed. But no one estimated truly the tremendous strength of the Turkish resistance against the Army. Instead of 5,000 casualties, which was the War Office estimate of the cost of the landing and of a successful and decisive operation, more than 13,000 casualties were incurred to gain only a footing on one tiny indecisive tip of the Peninsula, and many more in efforts to enlarge the ground gained. And this takes no account of the heavy losses and wastage in the months before the Battle of Suvla Bay, of the 40,000 casualties sustained in that battle, and of the 20,000 others incurred before the final evacuation.

Could the pictures, on which we must presently look, of April 25 with its immortal heroism, of May with its staggering disappointment, of August with its tragedy, and of December with its world-ruining failure and defeat, have risen before the eyes of those in whose hands the power lay and upon whose heads the responsibility before history must descend, can we doubt that they would have thought it better to persevere resolutely and faithfully with the naval attack in accordance with the orders and undertakings which had been given and received?

* * * * *

For consider what was the alternative, and what were the conditions in which it was now alone open to us.

We have seen that on March 26 General Liman von Sanders was appointed to the chief command at the Dardanelles, and the story cannot be better carried forward at this point than in his own words.

'In March already,' he writes,[1] 'intelligence about the preparation of a great expeditionary Corps . . . for a landing of troops near the Dardanelles began to thicken. That these reports, which came mostly from Athens, Sophia and Bucharest, contained most contradictory details was only natural. One time it was 50,000 men that were to take part in the Expedition; then again 80,000 English troops which were to concentrate for it on Imbros and Lemnos; another time, 50,000 Frenchmen in addition were mentioned. The arrival was reported at the Dardanelles of General Hamilton, who was to be in command, as well as that of the French General D'Amade on the cruiser *Provence*.

'The construction of landing piers in Mudros was known, and the daily discharge of articles of equipment and supplies. On March 17 four English officers arrived at the Piræus and there bought for cash forty-two large lighters and five tugs.

'At last, therefore, on March 24, Enver decided to form a special Army for the protection of the Dardanelles.

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'Late in the afternoon on March 24 Enver asked me on the telephone to remain in my office until he came. He soon appeared, and asked me if I were ready to take over the command of the Fifth Army which was just being formed for the Dardanelles. I agreed at once, but drew his attention to the fact that the troops then there must be quickly reinforced, for there was no time to lose.

'On the evening of the next day, March 25, I left Constantinople by water to betake myself to my new duty. I was not to see the Capital again for ten months. On the morning of the 26th we landed in the harbour of Gallipoli town.

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'There were laborious days ahead of us, as everything concerning the grouping of the troops and the watching of the most important pieces of the coast had to be altered.

'The Fifth Army then consisted of only five divisions which were divided between the European and Asiatic sides of the Dardanelles for coast protection. The divisions contained nine to twelve battalions, each eight hundred to a thousand men strong. The English allowed me four whole weeks before

[1] Liman von Sanders: 'Five Years in Turkey,' p. 76

their great landing. They had temporarily sent part of their troops to Egypt and, it is said, also to Cyprus. This time just sufficed to carry out the most necessary measures and to bring up the 3rd division under Colonel Nicolai from Constantinople.'

The German General proceeds to describe his dispositions and measures. They were certainly inspired by sound military knowledge. He divided his force into three fighting groups: the 5th and 17th Divisions near the Isthmus of Bulair; the 9th and 19th, towards the Southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula; the 11th and 3d on the Asiatic side.

'I ordered,' he says, 'each division to keep its units together and only to maintain the weakest possible force near the coast line for protective purposes. Whatever might happen, success could only be gained by taking every advantage of the mobility of the three fighting groups and not by mere passive resistance. It was essential, therefore, to exercise the Turkish troops by constant marches and drill, and thus keep them in a good mobile condition until the time for decisive action should arrive. To enable units to be moved without delay from one part of the Peninsula to the other, barges were collected at suitable harbours in the Straits and direct roads constructed by labour battalions between the various sectors of the front. Previous to this there were no roads worth mention on the Peninsula, only paths and bridle tracks suitable for mules in single file, but in no case passable for guns. . . .

'The re-grouping of the force was carried out at night to avoid observation by the enemy's aeroplanes. The Fifth Army had at that time not a single aeroplane.

'The work of strengthening the field fortifications was carried out with all available men and material, and mostly by night. Material for making obstacles was as scarce as tools for digging and construction work. Torpedo heads were used as tread mines, and the fencing around fields and gardens had often to supply the wood and wire for the entanglements. At suitable enemy landing places wire entanglements were laid near the shore below waterlevel.' [1]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Such were the occupations of General von Sanders and his Army at the end of March and during nearly the whole of April.

The first essential to the success of a military attack was 'surprise' both general and local. Tactical or local surprise no doubt remained, i.e., we still had a wide choice of landing places. But strategic or general surprise was gone. The 6,000 or 7,000 Turks who alone garrisoned the Peninsula after Turkey entered the war in November, 1914, would have been completely swamped and overwhelmed by 30,000 or 40,000 men landed suddenly at various points. The 20,000 Turks scattered throughout the Peninsula at the beginning of March, 1915, could not have maintained themselves till help arrived against an attack from the sea of 50,000 or 60,000. But at the period which this story has now reached at least 40,000 Turks were known to have been assembled, and to have made and be making whatever preparations were possible; and to overwhelm these with certainty before they could be reinforced might well have required an army of a hundred thousand men. Without such numbers the enterprise passed out of the sphere of sound preparation and reasonable certainty, and depended for its success upon good fortune and a great feat of arms.

The second essential for the attack was its *Intensity*. The more Surprise was absent, the more Intensity was vital. From beginning to end everything turned on Time. It was not a question of mere numbers: but of numbers applied in a very short space of time. A hundred thousand men landing upon the Peninsula in a fortnight might be less effective than 70,000 pressed into continuous battle for a week. To descend upon the Peninsula in the greatest possible numbers and the shortest possible time; to grapple with the local Turkish forces; to fight them day and night with superior numbers till they were utterly exhausted, to thrust in fresh troops and renew the battle unceasingly, to grip and racket the weaker enemy till

the life was shaken out of his smaller organism—in that process lay victory. And how much safer, how much cheaper, how much more merciful, than what was done.

This sudden short and intense effort demanded ample supplies of shells as well as of men. The broken character of the ground and the certainty of strong entrenchments made it necessary to support the attack by an ample land artillery, both of field guns and howitzers, with a good proportion of high-explosive shell. In the absence of artillery the modern rifle and machine gun are supreme. Troops have hardly ever succeeded in storming fortified positions in modern times except under cover of a superior very heavy artillery fire. In the fighting which followed the landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula, both sides were ill supplied with guns and still worse with ammunition. In consequence, as will be seen, offensive action by either was almost always defeated. The Allies, in spite of their sacrifices and superior numbers, could not make headway against the hail of bullets: and when the Turks in their turn attempted counter-attacks against our trenches with great determination, they too were shot down by thousands on every occasion.

Lord Kitchener of course appreciated perfectly the need for abundant artillery and ammunition. But this was at the time his most biting want. The shell-shortage crisis was each day becoming more acute. Demands were pouring in. Contracts were all inadequate in scale, and overdue in fulfilment. The British Army in France were scraping together and accumulating every available shell for the offensive which it had been decided to launch against the Germans early in May. The amount in hand judged by later standards was of course pitifully small and quite insufficient for the task on the Western front. Still those who were urging the offensive declared they had good prospects of success in spite of the scarcity of ammunition if every shell were given them. In fact they had no chance whatever, nor had they supplies of ammunition

necessary to sustain their attacks. But though the available ammunition was hopelessly insufficient for a great offensive on the Western front, it was enough to sustain adequately the much more limited operation which was impending in Gallipoli. Lord Kitchener's task at this juncture was therefore terrible but simple. He could have said to General Joffre and Sir John French: 'I have not got enough ammunition to sustain a battle on the Western front. I will not allow the British Army to be launched without it. There is no imperative need for an offensive either by the British or French Armies. There will be better chances, much more ammunition, and larger forces available later in the year. On the other hand, we are about to attempt an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Russia is in difficulties; but the way to help Russia is to force the Dardanelles. I must concentrate my available resources exclusively on this, so as to secure success in the shortest possible time. After success has been gained at Gallipoli and aid and encouragement thus brought to Russia, I shall be ready to discuss with you plans for an offensive in France in the summer or autumn.'

If he had made up his mind to this decision, had measured truly the proportion of things and had seen his course clearly, he had the power to take it. He would have been cordially supported by the Cabinet. In this case he might have won a decisive victory on the Peninsula with far less loss of life and expenditure of shells than was afterwards wrung from him: and he would in any case have saved the British Army in France from the futile slaughter of May, and possibly even discouraged the French from the long and frightful follies of their Spring offensive in Artois in which they squandered nearly a quarter of a million men.

Alternatively Lord Kitchener might have said to General Joffre: 'Although I do not think your offensive will succeed, yet if you insist I will co-operate. In that case I cannot attempt the Gallipoli operation, and unless the Navy will resume

the attack we shall have to admit a failure there.' Either course was painful; but both were sound and practical. I should of course have taken the first if the Navy continued unsuccessful, but I could not have complained if Lord Kitchener had taken the second. It would have confronted Admiral de Robeck, the Admiralty, and the Cabinet, with a naked choice of a humiliating failure or of resolutely persevering in the naval attack under all the improved conditions which had been established in April. The issue would have been grim, but again quite simple. I should have said to the War Council: 'If you wish this thing attempted, say so, and I will find a First Sea Lord and a Commander-in-Chief to execute your will. If you are not prepared to go so far, then we must break off the enterprise against Constantinople, as we have always held ourselves free to do, and we will cover up our failure as best we can by a landing at Alexandretta or in some other minor way.' If this situation had been definitely created, I am sure that Admiral de Robeck, urged as he then was by Commodore Keyes,[1] and backed as he would have been by the Admiralty and the Cabinet, would have resumed the naval operation which he had broken off after March 18. What the results would have been no one can declare. If he had succeeded, they must have been of supreme importance. If he had failed, at any rate there would have been no entanglement. The Prime Minister could have chosen another First Lord, or the country could have chosen another Prime Minister. Every one would have been free. The processes of thought logically and courageously applied may not prevent unpleasant things from happening in war, but at least they offer clear and honourable decisions in pursuance of which soldiers, sailors, and ministers, doing their duty in sincerity according to their lights, may calmly await the stroke of destiny.

But the events that followed yielded not even these sombre consolations. Lord Kitchener did not make up his mind be-

[1] His chief of staff.

tween the two courses, he drifted into both, and was unable to sustain either. The War Council, instead of coming to grips with him and making him come to grips with his problem, mutely and supinely awaited the mysterious workings of his mind. The First Sea Lord continued in a position where if the military attack failed he could say, 'I was always against the Dardanelles—see my memorandum of February 27,' and if it succeeded, 'I was always in favour of a joint operation—see my letter to the First Lord of January 4.' The British Army in France struggled forward at the side of the French into the disastrous offensives of May, and when these failed, as they were bound to, the Headquarters Staff turned upon Lord Kitchener and exposed the deficiency of shells, which they well knew from the beginning. Sir Ian Hamilton's Army sprang ashore on the Peninsula, and then while victory was within their grasp fell down for want of shells and reinforcements, both of which, on the scale they required them, could at any time have been supplied. And lastly the Fleet, although now fully equipped for the naval attack, having thrown their responsibilities upon the Army, never even tested the enemy defences, and became the spectators and subsidiary assistants of a long and lamentable series of disasters incurred and of opportunities for ever thrown away.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIRST DEFEAT OF THE U-BOATS

Chronology—Larger Submarines: Pre-war Strength—The Unknown Factors—Lord Fisher's Memorandum of 1913—The Admiralty View—Peculiarities of the Submarine Weapon—Guns in Submarines—Efficiency of the British Submarine Service—German Declaration of February 4, 1915: Threat of U-Boat War on Commerce—My Statement to the House of Commons—Admiralty Exertions—Decisions of February 11—Protection of the Channel Communications—Arming the Trawler Fleet—The Search for Guns—The Mosquito Fleet—The Indicator Nets—The Decoy Ships—February 18: The U-Boat Attack Begins—Its Failure—Losses of the Germans—The Straits of Dover Barrier—April and May: Failure Confirmed—The Blockade Controversy with the United States—Gravity of the Issue—Sir Edward Grey's Patience and Conciliation.

CHRONOLOGY is the key to narrative. Yet where a throng of events are marching abreast, it is inevitable that their progress should be modified by selection and classification. Some must stand on one side until the main press is over; others, taking advantage of any interlude, may hasten forward to periods beyond the general account.

During all the operations at the Dardanelles which a series of chapters has described, the general naval war was proceeding unceasingly. The Grand Fleet still watched its antagonists with tireless vigilance. The Cabinet still laboured to perfect and maintain the Blockade against the enemy on the sea and the lawyers across the ocean. A stream of reinforcements and supplies flowed incessantly to France. And lastly, the Admiralty had been called upon to protect the merchant fleets of Britain from a novel and unprecedented form of attack. The first U-boat campaign had begun, and to narrate

this episode in an intelligible form it is necessary to look back into the past and to advance somewhat before our time into the future.

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When I went to the Admiralty in 1911 we had 57 submarines (11 A's already obsolete, 11 B's, 33 C's, and 2 D's) compared to the German 15; but all our submarines, except the 2 D's, were of a class only capable of operating a short distance from their own coasts. They could not accompany the Fleet, nor make long independent voyages at sea; whereas 11 out of the German 15 were at least as good as our 2 D's. During the three years of preparation for which I was responsible, the submarine service was under Commodore Keyes. As early as 1912 we had begun to visualise in the over-sea submarine a new method of maintaining the close blockade of the German ports which was no longer possible by means of destroyers and surface craft. We therefore sought continually to build larger submarines of 'over-sea' or even 'ocean-going' capacity. We developed the E class and one or two other vessels of an even larger type. Great technical difficulties were encountered, and the delays of the contractors and of the Admiralty departments were vexatious in the extreme. The larger type was entirely experimental, and there were not wanting experts who doubted whether the technical difficulties of submerging vessels above a certain size could be surmounted. In addition, owing to the contracts which had been made, practically assigning the monopoly of submarine building to one particular firm, we were at first considerably hampered even in our experimental work. In 1912, on the recommendation of Commodore Keyes, we decided to break these fettering contracts and to place orders for submarines of different patterns on the Clyde and on the Tyne. We also purchased Italian and French submarines, in order to learn all that could be known of their design. Progress was, however, extremely slow, and beset by doubt at every stage.

At the outbreak of the war we had altogether 74 submarines built, 31 building, and 14 ordered or projected. The Germans had 33 built and 28 building. But of the British total of 74 built, only **18** (8 E's and 10 D's) were 'over-sea' boats, whereas of the 33 German submarines built no fewer than **28** were 'over-sea' vessels. The situation therefore was that we had a large force of submarines for the defence of our shores against invasion and for the protection of our harbours ; but we had not enough 'over-sea' boats to maintain a continuous complete Submarine Blockade of the Heligoland Bight: nor so many of this class as the Germans.

It would be affectation to pretend that we were contented with this state of affairs. On the other hand, it is probable that if we had launched out into an enormous scheme of submarine building before the war, we should have stimulated to an equal, or perhaps greater, extent a corresponding German programme. This would have exposed us to dangers which could never have been compensated by an increase in the number of British submarines. It may well be that all was for the best.

Neither the British nor the German Admiralty understood at the outbreak of hostilities all that submarines could do. It was not until these weapons began to be used under the stern conditions of war that their extraordinary sea-keeping capacity became apparent. It was immediately found on both sides that the larger class of submarines could remain at sea alone and unaided for eight or ten days at a time without breaking the endurance of their crews. These periods were rapidly doubled and trebled in both Navies. So far from having to return to port in bad weather, it appeared that submarines could ride out a gale better than any other class of vessel. Tried as they were forthwith to the extreme limit of human courage and fortitude, the skilled, highly trained, highly educated officers, sailors and engineers who manned them responded with incredible devotion.

Before the war what submarines could do was one mystery. What they would be ordered to do was another.

At the end of 1913 Lord Fisher, then unemployed, wrote his celebrated memorandum on the probable use by the Germans of submarines against commerce, and declared that they would certainly not hesitate to sink merchant vessels which they could not bring into port as required by the laws of war. The memorandum owed a great deal to the technical knowledge of Captain S. S. Hall, who was one of Lord Fisher's intimate followers; but the vision of the old Admiral governed and dominated the argument. I caused this memorandum to be immediately considered by the Sea Lords and by the technical departments.

Neither the First Sea Lord nor I shared Lord Fisher's belief that the Germans would use submarines for sinking unarmed merchantmen without challenge or any means of rescuing the crews. It was abhorrent to the immemorial law and practice of the sea. Prince Louis wrote to me that Lord Fisher's brilliant paper 'was marred by this suggestion.' I must not hesitate to print documents which tell against my judgment, such as it was. On January 1, 1914, I wrote as follows to Lord Fisher:—

'I have read and re-read with the closest attention the brilliant and most valuable paper on Submarines which you have drawn up for the Admiralty, and I have requested my naval colleagues to study it forthwith.

'There are a few points on which I am not convinced. Of these the greatest is the question of the use of submarines to sink merchant vessels. I do not believe this would ever be done by a civilised Power.' I proceeded to compare such outrages with the spreading of pestilence and the assassination of individuals. 'These are frankly unthinkable propositions, and the excellence of your paper is, to some extent, marred by the prominence assigned to them.

'Like you, I am disquieted about our submarine development, and it is clear that in the near future we must make an

effort on a greatly increased scale to counter the enormous programmes in which Germany has been indulging for the last 6 years. . . .'

But if we did not believe that a civilised nation would ever resort to such a practice, we were sure that if they did, they would unite the world against them. In particular it seemed certain that a Power offending in this way would be unable to distinguish between enemy and neutral ships, and that mistakes would be made which, quite apart from moral indignation, would force powerful neutrals to declare war upon a pirate nation. In his diagnosis of the German character Lord Fisher was right and the Admiralty was wrong. But even if we had adopted his view it is not easy to see what particular action could have been taken before the war to guard against such an attack.

The submarine is the only vessel of war which does not fight its like. This is not to say that combats have not taken place between submarines, but these are exceptional and usually inconclusive. It follows therefore that the submarine fleet on one side ought not to be measured against the submarine fleet on the other. Its strength should be regulated not according to the number of enemy submarines, but according to your own war plan and the special circumstances of your country. If Germany had had four times as many submarines at the beginning of the war than was in fact the case, she would have gained a great advantage and placed us immediately in serious danger. It would have been no answer to this danger to have multiplied our submarines by four, nor should we have exposed Germany to an equal danger had we done so.

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In judging these questions, regard must be had to the immense changes and advances in naval science and invention which took place in the years of war. Everything must be weighed in relation to the knowledge and circumstances of the

actual time. For instance, before the war I consistently discouraged the use of guns in submarines, whereas in the later phases of the war great injury was inflicted upon us by the guns of German submarines, our own submarines developed a regular gun armament, and we even built a submarine to carry a 12-inch gun. But this was explained by entirely new purposes and new conditions which subsequently came into view. If the German submarines had confined themselves to attacking vessels of war, they would not have found any use for their petty guns and would have relied solely upon the fateful torpedo. It was only when they began to war on defenceless, or almost defenceless, merchantmen that their consumption of torpedoes became prohibitive and they realised that gunfire would achieve their purpose in many cases equally well. It was only when the science of submarine building had advanced sufficiently and the unlimited funds of war were available that we were able to build a submarine large enough to carry a 12-inch gun in the hopes that it would pop up all of a sudden and fire a great shell into the hull of an unsuspecting light cruiser. A superficial and anachronistic critic may easily declare that the policy of arming submarines with guns was right, and that those who opposed it were wrong. I rest, however, on my opinion that guns should not be put into submarines for the purpose of attacking warships, including other submarines, unless the gun can be of such a size that it will produce results as decisive as those of the torpedo; and I find confirmation from the fact that no warship was ever sunk during the war by the gunfire of a submarine; and that of the hundreds of trawlers, many armed merely with a 3-pdr. gun, only two were sunk in their continuous conflict with submarines.

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If I resist any impeachment of the Boards of Admiralty over whom I presided for their Submarine policy before the

war, still less will I admit that the British Submarine Service was in any way inferior in skill or enterprise to that of Germany. On the contrary I claim and will adduce proofs that their exploits proved them month by month incontestably superior. But they suffered from one overwhelming disadvantage which it was not in our power to remove, viz., a dearth of targets. Except for a few sudden dashes to sea by fast vessels, the occasional unexpected voyage of a single cruiser, or a carefully prepared, elaborately protected, swiftly executed parade of the High Sea Fleet, the German Navy remained locked in its torpedo-proof harbours; and outside of the Baltic all German commerce was at an end. On the other hand, every sea was crowded with British merchant craft—dozens of large vessels arriving and departing every day, while our fleets were repeatedly in the open sea and our patrolling cruisers and merchant cruisers maintained a constant and unbroken watch and distant blockade. If the positions had been reversed and had we permitted ourselves to attack defenceless merchantmen, far more formidable results would have been achieved. Nor is this a matter of assertion. It is capable of proof. As will be seen when the exploits of British submarines in the Sea of Marmora are recounted, one submarine alone—E11—three times passed and re-passed through the terrible dangers of the tenfold minefields, of the Nagara net, and of the long vigilantly guarded reaches of the Dardanelles, remained in the Marmora ninety-six days (forty-seven in one spell) and sunk single-handed 101 vessels, including a battleship, a modern destroyer and three gunboats. This prodigious feat of Commander Nasmith, V.C., though closely rivalled by that of Commander Boyle, V.C., in E14, remains unsurpassed in the history of submarine warfare.

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On February 4, 1915, the German Admiralty issued the following declaration:—

All the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland, including the whole of the English Channel, are hereby declared to be a war zone. From February 18 onward every enemy merchant vessel found within this war zone will be destroyed without its being always possible to avoid danger to the crews and passengers.

Neutral ships will also be exposed to danger in the war zone, and in view of the misuse of neutral flags ordered on January 31 by the British Government,[1] and owing to unforeseen incidents to which naval warfare is liable, it is impossible to avoid attacks being made on neutral ships in mistake for those of the enemy.

We were now confronted with the situation which Lord Fisher had foreseen in his Memorandum of 1913. The event did not, however, cause the Admiralty serious alarm. Our information showed that the Germans could not possess more than twenty to twenty-five submarines capable of blockading the British Isles. As these could only work in three reliefs, not more than seven or eight were likely to be at work simultaneously: and having regard to the enormous volume of traffic moving in and out of the very numerous ports of the United Kingdom, it seemed certain that no appreciable effect would in fact be produced upon our trade, provided always that our ships continued boldly to put to sea. On the other hand, we were sure that the German declaration and the inevitable accidents to neutrals arising out of it would offend and perhaps embroil the United States: and that in any case our position for enforcing the blockade would be greatly strengthened. We looked forward to a sensible abatement of the pressure which the American Government was putting upon us to relax our system of blockade, and we received a whole armoury of practical arguments with which to reinforce our side of the contention. We consulted long and care-

[1] We had authorised recourse to this time-honoured naval stratagem, knowing well the embarrassment it would cause to the enemy submarines.

fully together at the Admiralty on successive days, and thereafter I announced that we would publish every week the sinkings of merchant vessels effected by the German submarines, together with the numbers of ships entering and leaving British ports. In my speech on the naval estimates on February 15, I used the following words:—

The tasks which lie before us are anxious and grave. We are, it now appears, to be the object of a kind of warfare which has never before been practised by a civilised State. The scuttling and sinking at sight, without search or parley, of merchant ships by submarine agency is a wholly novel and unprecedented departure. It is a state of things which no one had ever contemplated, and which would have been universally reprobated and repudiated before this War. But it must not be supposed because the attack is extraordinary that a good defence and a good reply cannot be made. The statutes of ancient Rome contained no provision for the punishment of parricide, but when the first offender appeared, it was found that satisfactory arrangements could be made to deal with him. Losses no doubt will be incurred—of that I give full warning—but we believe that no vital injury can be done. If our traders put to sea regularly and act in the spirit of the gallant captain of the merchant ship *Laertes*, whose well-merited honour has been made public this morning, and if they take the precautions which are proper and legitimate, we expect that the losses will be confined within manageable limits, even at the outset, when the enemy must be expected to make his greatest effort to produce an impression.

All losses can, of course, be covered by resort on the part of the shipowners to the Government insurance scheme, the rates of which are now one-fifth of what they were at the outbreak of War. On the other hand, the reply which we shall make will not perhaps be wholly ineffective. Germany cannot be allowed to adopt a system of open piracy and murder, or what has always hitherto been called open piracy and murder, on the high seas, while remaining herself protected by the bulwark of international instruments which she has utterly repudiated and defied, and which we, much to our detriment, have respected. There are good reasons for believing that the

economic pressure which the Navy exerts is beginning to be felt in Germany. We have, to some extent, restricted their imports of useful commodities like copper, petrol, rubber, nickel, manganese, antimony, which are needed for the efficient production of war materials, and for carrying on modern war on a great scale. The tone of the German Chancellor's remarks, and the evidences of hatred and anger against this country which are so apparent in the German Press, encourage us to believe that this restriction is proving inconvenient. We shall, of course, redouble our efforts to make it so. So far, however, we have not attempted to stop imports of food. We have not prevented neutral ships from trading direct with German ports. We have allowed German exports in neutral ships to pass unchallenged. The time has come when the enjoyment of these immunities by a State which has, as a matter of deliberate policy, placed herself outside all international obligations, must be reconsidered. A further declaration on the part of the Allied Governments will promptly be made which will have the effect for the first time of applying the full force of naval pressure to the enemy.

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Meanwhile at the Admiralty we made the most strenuous exertions to increase our resources for meeting the attack and to devise every method of countering it. I presided myself over the Conferences which were held, and on the 11th issued the following Minute:—

Secretary
First Sea Lord
Third Sea Lord
Fourth Sea Lord
and others concerned.

February 11, 1915.

The following seem to me to be the conclusions which should be drawn from our discussion yesterday :—

1. The first step should be the closing of the Straits of Dover by lines of nets drifting to and fro with the tide, and each section watched by its respective trawler and with a proper proportion of armed trawlers and destroyers to attack any submarine entangled. In this moving barrier there should be a gate through which traffic can be passed, and it appears neces-

sary that this gate should be in a span not of indicator nets, but of anti-submarine nets. Traffic must be invariably directed to this gate, which should be so arranged as to force a submarine to come to the surface to pass through it. Destroyers and other armed craft should continually watch the approaches and passages through this gate, and be ready to attack any submarine showing on the surface.

The Actæon net would be suitable for this purpose, but Sir Arthur Wilson wishes also to use it for netting in Zeebrugge. Both services are urgent and important, and it should be carefully considered which should have priority, and how the deficiency can be supplied. It appears to me essential that if we are to maintain a complete barrier across the Straits we should have a plainly marked mode of passage open to traffic, which passage is not navigable by submarines submerged.

2. After the provision of the trawlers and drifters for the Dover net barrier has been fully made, it would seem that the rest of the 120 small craft assigned to that area should be used as watchers on both sides of the barrier, being dotted about the sea so as to cover a belt 5 miles wide on the North Sea side of the barrier and 10 miles wide on the English Channel side of it. The duty of these unarmed craft is to report the presence of a submarine either approaching the barrier on the surface or entangled in the nets. The aim should be for the drifters to cover as much ground as possible in the English Channel so that submarines cannot find any quiet area. I do not know of any other duty which they can discharge. It would appear that they should be picketed out and anchored, and have a good and simple means of communicating the presence of a submarine, and a passing signal made by one of their number to the nearest watching destroyer or armed trawler in order that the vessel may be attacked.

Incidentally, this system of watching a belt will facilitate the safe passage of transports across the Straits both by day and night. It should be possible to get from them an hourly 'all clear' report. The dangers to transports are greatly reduced if submarines cannot lurk about and rise to the surface to take observations without being molested. I cannot think that more than 120 drifters and trawlers will be necessary for the Dover service.

It appears to me to be possible to exaggerate the number of destroyers required. I should have thought that the present flotilla of the Admiral of the Dover Patrol, if left intact, would have been amply sufficient for the purpose, having regard to the other pressing demands upon this class of vessel.

3. After the Straits of Dover have been dealt with, the next demand on the indicator nets and net-laying drifters is to close in a similar manner the North Channel.[1] No gate would appear to be required here, as traffic has long ago been stopped.

4. Next in order of importance is the Southampton-Havre convoy route. It is not possible to provide wire nets at present for use against submarines operating on this route. The method adopted should be to watch the approaches for 25 miles out on each side by trawler pickets anchored or working in particular squares and provided with the means of making known the presence of a lurking submarine, as many as possible being armed. Outside the limits of these terminals the protection given to the transports must be by destroyers, who should, as found most convenient, either accompany specific transports or divisions of transports, or patrol up and down the route. Of the two courses the former would appear to be preferable, as not limiting the transports to particular lines, and enabling them to zig-zag with greater freedom. Fishing nets should be laid in sections to embarrass submarines on the approaches on either side.

5. Next in order of importance is the watching of particular bays or sheltered places where enemy submarines may be supposed to rest, and the establishment of a watch near the Lizard. The number of trawlers and drifters assigned to this service by the Fourth Sea Lord might be reduced, the saving being taken for the North Channel.

6. It is not until all the above needs have been dealt with that an attempt should be made to net in the southern waters of the Irish Sea. This is a much larger business than any of the others, and will make an undue demand upon any resources of nets likely to be available in the near future. The establishment of an active patrol of yachts, trawlers, and drifters from Dublin is the best we can do in the present circumstances.

[1] Between Scotland and Ireland.

7. The following guns may be considered available for yachts, trawlers, and drifters:—

12-pdr.	12 cwt.	25
12-pdr.	8 cwt.	25
12-pdr.	4 cwt.	3
6-pdr.	Nordenfelt	11
6-pdr.	Hotchkiss	56
3-pdr.	"	24

Any saluting 3-pdr. guns in the cruisers should be removed with their ammunition, and the 3-pdrs. in the *Majestic* class, other than those that are having their turrets removed, could also be spared, having regard to their 6-inch and 6-pdr. gun armament.

Adjutant General Royal Marines will provide from the Blue Marine Artillery Battalion one gunner for each 12-pdr. and 6-pdr. gun. These gunners are to teach the members of the yacht or trawler crew or members of the armed party placed on board as quickly as possible how to handle the gun, and as soon as they can satisfy an inspecting officer that their pupils are proficient they will be withdrawn to the Royal Marine Headquarters. For giving this instruction, the marine will receive a bounty of £2, and for qualifying as a gunner the recruit or member of the crew will also receive a bounty of £2. In six weeks or two months we ought to have the bulk of these men back at Headquarters.

It is proposed also to put an armed party on board every trawler or drifter, whether armed with a gun or not, not only for action against submarines who may come to the surface and take observations in their neighbourhood, but as a preventive against mine-laying.

Adjutant General Royal Marines will call for volunteers from the Crystal Palace for this purpose, and, if necessary, a small bounty can be paid to men volunteering. Three men and a corporal (who may be specially promoted) should be assigned to each drifter and trawler as they become available. Efforts are being made to secure sporting rifles in England and America,[1] and these as they come to hand will be used, first, to arm the armed parties of the newly taken up trawlers and drifters, and after this is done to replace service rifles in the

[1] This gives some idea of the munitions stringency

possession of the crews of yachts, trawlers, and drifters already in commission. Men who suffer seriously from sea-sickness may have the option for that cause of reverting to shore service.

I await Sir Arthur Wilson's proposals for allocating fifty 18-cwt., 12-cwt., and 8-cwt. 12-pdrs. to selected decoy vessels, merchant and Admiralty vessels plying in the dangerous areas. For these also 1 marine gunner will be provided, and a small armed party placed on board, as in the case of the trawlers.

The requirements of these services are to be met in precedence over other requirements which have not yet matured, and for which these guns have been prepared—for instance, the 36 which are required for fleet sweepers, and the 24 required for monitors will not be needed for two or three months, and may do useful service meanwhile. By that time some other warships may be paid off, which may increase our available resources. The 12-cwt.—12-pdrs. from the *Mars*, *Victorious*, and *Illustrious* need not at present be appropriated for fleet sweepers. Plymouth anti-aircraft can be reduced from 6 to 2.

8. All suitable yachts in the United Kingdom or other small vessels not now appropriated will be immediately commandeered.

I wish to receive a weekly return of the whole 'yacht, trawler, and drifter fleet,' showing the additions made each week. Proposals should be put forward for the proper organisation and control of the 'trawler fleet.' It may be thought convenient to call the different squadrons by the names of the commanding officer, and this may foster rivalry and *esprit de corps*.

9. I still think that the allocation of 8 destroyers to the Tyne, and 5 to the Tees, and 8 to the Immingham lies under the criticism that it is too many to be spared and too few to discharge any effective service. I should prefer to see the 8 destroyers from the Tyne added to the defences of the Forth and be made available for escort duties from there, and the 13 destroyers of the Tees and Immingham should go to Portsmouth, to be available for general duty on the South and West Coasts. But I agree that any change of this kind may be gradual, and the allocation proposed by the Chief of the Staff should therefore be carried out at once.[1]

W. S. C.

[1] See also Appendix III, page 568.

It will be seen that we regarded the cross-Channel communications as our first and vital care. New Divisions were now passing almost every week to France, and their conduct and escort required ceaseless and intricate precautions. Elaborate instructions for dealing with or avoiding submarine attacks were also given to the captains of British merchant ships, and many other measures were taken as recorded in the Official Naval History.[1]

Apart from arming and commissioning the enormous Mosquito Fleet on which we chiefly relied, our two principal devices for destroying the German submarines were the Bircham Indicator Nets and the Decoy Ships, afterwards called the Q boats. The Indicator Net was a light flexible curtain of thin steel wire woven into 6 or 10-foot meshes and supplied in lengths of 200 yards. These were laid, clipped together, in long lines across particular channels, and their floats were watched continually by armed trawlers. We had tried them, not without some risk, on one of our own submarines with good results. The submergence of the glass buoys on which the net was hung or the automatic ignition of a calcium light betrayed immediately the presence of the submarine. The net trailing backward wrapped itself around the vessel with a good chance of entangling its propeller, while at the same time a tell-tale buoy attached to the net by a long line floated on the surface, and enabled the hunting vessels to follow their submarine enemy wherever he went. At least 1,000 miles of these nets were ordered during the first months of 1915; and by February 13 seventeen miles of the Straits of Dover were already obstructed by guarded nets. Such was the theory, but needless to say it encountered many difficulties and disappointments in practice.

The device of the Decoy Ships was also simple; the idea arose in the following manner. In the previous September a small steamer, plying between St. Malo and Southampton

[1] Vol. II, pages 271-2-3.

with fruit and vegetables, had been fired at by a German submarine. Admiral Sir Hedworth Meux, who commanded at Portsmouth, came to the Admiralty to see me on general business, and in conversation it was suggested that a gun might be concealed on this small ship under the fruit and vegetables. This was accordingly done. No opportunity of using it occurred, but the idea was revived under the renewed threat of extended submarine warfare. Early in February I gave directions for a number of vessels to be constructed or adapted for the purpose of trapping and ambushing German submarines. For the most part they were ordinary tramp steamers, but some were to be specially constructed of the build and type of Norwegian fishing vessels. These vessels carried concealed guns which by a pantomime trick of trap doors and shutters could suddenly come into action. Great ingenuity was shown by the Admiralty departments in developing this idea, and the use of these vessels afterwards afforded opportunity for some of the most brilliant and daring stratagems in the naval war.

In addition every form of scientific warfare against submarines was perseveringly studied. Already the microphone or hydrophone for detecting the beat of a submarine propeller in the distance had been discovered: but at this date it was only in an experimental condition. Bomb-lances, explosive sweeps, Actæon nets (or necklaces of explosives) were eagerly and simultaneously developed. A close and fruitful union between the scientist, the inventor, and the submarine officer was established, the best brains of the Navy were concentrated on the problem, and no idea, technical or tactical, was spurned by the Admiralty Staff.

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The German U-boat campaign, or the so-called blockade of the British Isles, began as promised on February 18; and that same day a British merchant ship was torpedoed in the Channel. By the end of the first week eleven British ships had been

attacked, of which seven had been sunk. In the same period no less than 1,381 merchant vessels had arrived in, or sailed from, British ports. The second week of the attack was completely ineffective: only three ships were assailed and all escaped. The arrivals and departures aggregated 1,474. By the end of February we were sure that the basis on which we were acting was sound: British trade was proceeding as usual, and the whole of our transportation across the Channel flowed on, division by division, uninterrupted. We continued to publish the weekly figures during the whole of March. In the four weeks of that month upward of six thousand vessels reached or left British ports, out of which only twenty-one were sunk, and these together aggregated only 65,000 tons. April confirmed the conclusions of March: only twenty-three ships were sunk out of over six thousand arrivals and departures, and of these six were neutrals and only eleven, aggregating 22,000 tons, were British. The failure of the German submarine campaign was therefore patent to the whole world.

Meanwhile the Germans were themselves already paying heavily for their policy. At least four U-boats out of their small numbers available had been destroyed. On March 1 one became entangled in the Indicator Nets off Start Bay near Dartmouth, and was blown up under water the next day by an explosive sweep. On the 4th the Dover nets and destroyers detected, chased and sunk U8, her entire crew being rescued and made prisoners. On the 6th a hostile submarine, which proved finally to be U12, was sighted off Aberdeen, and after a four days' hunt of incredible perseverance and skill by our small craft, was destroyed and ten survivors taken prisoner. On the 16th a still more remarkable incident occurred: Commander Weddigen, who since his exploits in sinking the three cruisers off the Dutch coast in September, 1914, had become a German national hero, sank a merchant ship off the south coast of Ireland, after taking from it a small gun as a trophy. He was returning to Germany on the 18th when, near the Pent-

land Firth, he fell in with the Grand Fleet at exercise. The Fourth Battle Squadron was now commanded by Admiral Sturdee flying his flag in the *Dreadnought*. The luck which had brought about the Battle of the Falkland Islands had clearly not deserted Admiral Sturdee, for in ten minutes the *Dreadnought*, handled with great skill by its captain and navigating officer and aided by the *Temeraire*, rammed the submarine. Her bows reared out of the water revealing her number, U29, as she sank for ever to the bottom of the sea with every soul on board. So perished the destroyer of the *Cressy*, the *Aboukir* and the *Hogue*.

Most of the other U-boats returning to Germany had rough and grim experiences to report. One had been caught in the nets off Dover and only escaped after fearful adventures; another had been rammed by a well-handled merchant ship, the *Thordis*, and with difficulty managed to crawl home in a damaged condition; a third narrowly escaped at the end of a three hours' chase by the destroyer *Ghurka*. There were many other incidents of a similar character.

It was in the Straits of Dover that we had concentrated our greatest efforts. It was here that we achieved our most complete success. Early in April U32 was entangled in the Dover nets, and preferred to return all round the North of Scotland rather than renew her experiences. The account which she gave to the German naval staff of the defences and barriers in the Straits of Dover was such that all U-boats were absolutely forbidden to attempt to pass the Straits; all must make a détour 'north about' round Scotland on their way to our western approaches. This prohibition continued in force for more than a year. The eastern waters of the Channel thus became completely clear, and no sinkings within the Dover cordon occurred after the middle of April. We did not, however, know how well our measures and the exertions of Admiral Hood, who carried them out and constantly elaborated them, had succeeded. Injustice was done to this officer when, upon

Lord Fisher's advice, I transferred him, about the middle of that month, to another command and appointed in his stead Admiral Bacon, whose mechanical aptitudes and scientific attainments seemed specially to be required on this critical station. It was not until the middle of May that I became aware, from constant study of our gathering information, how excellent had been Admiral Hood's work. Only a few more days were left me at the Admiralty. There was time, however, to repair the injustice, and almost my last official act was to appoint him to the command of the 3d Battle-Cruiser Squadron. This great prize he accepted with the utmost delight. Alas, it led him to a glorious doom in the Battle of Jutland!

Surveying the situation in April, it was evident that not only had the Germans failed in the slightest degree to impede the movements of British trade, troops and supplies, but that they had themselves suffered heavy and disproportionate losses in the vital units on which their whole policy depended. By May their premature and feeble campaign had been completely broken, and for nearly eighteen months, in spite of tragic incidents, we suffered no appreciable inconvenience. All the measures which we had taken, and all the organisations which had been set on foot, to deal with this unprecedented form of attack, were, however, developed and perfected with the utmost energy. Our merchant skippers were made increasingly familiar with all the methods by which submarine attack should be encountered or avoided. The vigilance and ingenuity of our multiplying Mosquito Fleet was stimulated by a generous system of rewards. The Indicator Nets were improved, and produced in great quantities. Tireless scientific research pursued the secret of detecting the presence of a submerged submarine through the agency of the hydrophone. Lastly, the Decoy Ships were increased in numbers, and their ambuscades and stratagems raised to a fine art. To the providential warning of this impotent campaign and the exertions made in consequence of it, we were to owe our safety in

the terrible days which were destined eventually to come upon us.

* * * * *

Results scarcely less to our advantage were experienced in our relations with the United States, on which the whole efficiency of our blockade of the Central Empires depended. On March 3 I had written to the Cabinet as follows:—

The international laws relating to blockade were framed without reference to the new conditions introduced into warfare by the presence of the submarine. However great the superiority of the stronger fleet, it is not practicable to draw blockading lines in close proximity to the enemy's coasts and harbours, as was always previously possible, because the submarines of the weaker fleet would sink the blockading vessels although that fleet was unable or unwilling to put to sea. It therefore becomes necessary to draw the lines of blockade at a greater distance from the enemy's coasts and ports than heretofore, and this involves in certain cases the inclusion within the scope of the blockading lines, not only of enemy but of neutral ports. This prevents the use of the term "blockade" according to its strict technical interpretation. But it does not in the least prevent an effective blockade in the natural and practical, as opposed to the legal and technical, sense. The British naval blockade of German North Sea ports is at present maintained by the cruiser cordon at the mouth of the English Channel and the flotillas at the Straits of Dover, and by the cruiser cordon and cruiser squadrons from the North of Scotland to Iceland. These blockading lines are in every sense effective: no instance is known to the British Admiralty of any vessel, the stopping of which had been authorised by the Foreign Office, passing them unchallenged. It is not a case of a paper blockade, but of a blockade as real and as efficient as any that has ever been established, having regard to the new and unforeseen conditions of naval war. The means of carrying on an effective blockade of the enemy's ports ought not to be denied to the stronger naval power. . . . All the time we are ourselves subjected, so far as lies in the strength of the enemy, to indiscriminate attacks by mines lying in the open sea as well as to the deliberate sinking of merchantmen

without challenge, by submarine agency. It is for neutral nations to recognise that it is not practically possible, nor in neutral interests, to claim the maintenance of a situation which would deprive naval strength of all its rights while permitting naval weakness to indulge in every abuse.

This is not the place to discuss the grave and intricate questions of international law which had arisen since the beginning of the war between Great Britain and the United States and other neutral nations. The arguments on both sides were technical and interminable, and whole libraries can be filled with them. Underlying all the legal disputes and manœuvres, was that great fund of kinship and goodwill towards us, of sympathy for the cause of the Allies, of affection for France and of indignation against Germany, which always swayed, and in the end triumphantly dominated, American action. But in spite of this we might well at this time have been forced to give up the whole efficiency of our blockade to avoid a rupture with the United States.

There is nowadays a strong tendency to underestimate the real danger of an adverse decision in America at this period. The National tradition of the United States was not favourable to us. The Treaty with Prussia in 1793 in defence of 'the freedom of the seas' constituted the first international relationship of the American Republic. The war of 1812, not forgotten in America, had arisen out of these very questions of neutrality. The established rules of international law did not cover the conditions which prevailed in the great struggle. The whole conception of conditional contraband was affected by the fact that the distinction between armies and nations had largely passed away. The old laws of blockade were, as has been shown, inapplicable in the presence of the submarine. It was not always possible to harmonise our action with the strict letter of the law. From this arose a series of delicate and deeply perplexing discussions in which rigid legalists across the Atlantic occupied a very strong position. There were in

addition serious political dangers: Irish and German influences were powerful and active; a strong party in the Senate was definitely anti-British; the State Department was jealously and vigilantly watched, lest it should show partiality to Great Britain. The slightest mistake in dealing with the American situation might at this juncture have created a crisis of the first magnitude. It was the memorable achievement of Sir Edward Grey, seconded by our Ambassador at Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, that this peril was averted. British and American gratitude also illumines the memory of the United States Ambassador in London, Mr. Page, whose wisdom and generous nobility guarded the English-speaking world and its destiny from measureless injury.

It was in these issues that the first German U-boat campaign gave us our greatest assistance. The German announcement threatening neutral as well as British merchant ships had altered the whole position of our controversies with America. A great relief became immediately apparent. The torpedoing at the end of February of the Norwegian steamer *Belridge*, bound from America with oil for the Dutch Government, was another event which turned the current of American irritation from the British blockade to the German outrages. All the forces friendly to the Allies throughout the Union were animated and strengthened, and German influences proportionately cast down. The stringency of our measures against Germany could be increased without deranging the precarious equipoise of our relations with the great Republic. Sir Edward Grey, aided and guided by Mr. Page, was enabled by processes of patience, tact and conciliation to sustain our position without quarrelling through the whole of March and April: and in May an event occurred which was decisive.

CHAPTER XV

THE INCREASING TENSION

Suspense—Lord Fisher's Attitude—Sir John Jellicoe's Health—Question of His Successor—The Battle Cruiser Fleet—Correspondence with Lord Fisher—Lord Fisher and the Sea Lords—His Position Defined—Difficulties and Friction—Further Correspondence with Lord Fisher—The Munition Crisis—Lord Kitchener and His Colleagues—Grave Embarrassments—Admiralty and War Office Compared—Growing Political Discontent.

APRIL was a month of painful and harassing suspense. Sir Ian Hamilton's Army was repacking at Alexandria; Admiral de Robeck's attention was absorbed in preparation for the landing. The Turks were concentrating, organising and fortifying. Italy and the Balkans trembled in the balance. Our relations with the United States were most delicate. The position on and behind the Russian front caused profound anxiety. A complete breakdown in the methods of munition supply by the War Office plainly impended. The political situation grew tense.

* * * * *

After March 18 the attitude of the First Sea Lord had become one of quasi-detachment. He was greatly relieved that the burden had now been assumed by the Army. He approved every operational telegram which I or the Chief of the Staff drafted for him. In the end he assented to whatever steps were considered necessary for the proper support of the Army. But while he welcomed every sign of the despatch of troops, he grudged every form of additional naval aid. He endeavoured repeatedly to turn my mind from the Dardanelles back to the Northern theatre, where, however, there could not be any

serious naval operation on our initiative for many months. He evinced increasing concern about the situation in the North Sea.

Although I did not share Lord Fisher's anxiety, real or assumed, about the North Sea, I thought this month of April was a critical one. The Germans must know that we had a very considerable fleet, including some of our best modern ships, withdrawn from the main and for the Navy decisive theatre. We hoped that they would believe that the forces at the Dardanelles were even larger than they were. We had sent several of the dummy battleships to the Mediterranean, hoping thereby to tempt the enemy to battle in the North Sea.

The War Staff orders for the attack on the Dardanelles approved by Lord Fisher contained the following passage:—'A number of merchant vessels have been altered to represent "Dreadnought" battleships and cruisers, and are indistinguishable from them at 3 or 4 miles distance. . . . They should be used with due precaution to prevent their character being discovered, and should be shown as part of the Fleet off the entrance to the Dardanelles, as if held in reserve. *They may mislead the Germans as to the margin of British strength in Home Waters.*' [1]

We now know that they completely deceived the Turks, who identified and reported one to Germany as the *Tiger*. When I saw the First Sea Lord cordially agree in such a policy of courting battle, I could not take very seriously his general attitude of apprehension. He knew perfectly well that we were strong enough to fight, and no one would have been better pleased had the battle begun.

* * * * *

After the action of the Dogger Bank Sir John Jellicoe became seriously indisposed and had to undergo a minor, though trying, surgical operation on shore. I could not help feeling

[1] My italics.

that the somewhat gloomy views he had taken in January had a physical cause besides the continuous strain of labour and responsibility which he had borne since the outbreak of war. Although we did not see eye to eye on various questions, and adopted a somewhat different standard of values, I retained the greatest admiration for his gifts and qualities both as an organiser and as a seaman. I therefore advised His Majesty to mark his eminent services by conferring upon him the Grand Cross of the Bath.

During his illness I wished to make Admiral Beatty Acting Commander-in-Chief, giving him for this purpose a seniority superior to that of Admiral Burney, who was the next senior officer to Sir John Jellicoe, but whose health at this time was also somewhat affected by the rigours of service. I hoped that if Admiral Beatty held the command of the Grand Fleet for several weeks, the naval objections to his want of seniority—he was still only a Rear-Admiral—would pass away and he would be accepted thenceforward as the recognised Second-in-Command and as the obvious successor to Sir John Jellicoe should ill-health prevent that officer from resuming his duties, or should any other cause make his transference to the Admiralty or to some other sphere desirable. I obtained Lord Fisher's concurrence in this most important decision. I was forced, however, to abandon my intention for the time being, because Admiral Beatty and his battle-cruisers could not be moved from the Forth, and it proved impossible to surmount the technical difficulties of his exercising the supreme command of the main Fleet while it remained at Scapa. I therefore contented myself as an interim measure with giving him a seniority as Acting Vice-Admiral, which made him senior to any other officer who could conceivably be involved in any operation which might arise in the North Sea while the Grand Fleet continued so far from the scene of action.

I also devised and carried through the formation of the Battle Cruiser Fleet. This organisation was to consist of three

squadrons, each of three battle-cruisers, each attended by a light cruiser squadron of four of our latest and fastest vessels, together with the *M* flotilla of our swiftest destroyers. The central conception of this force was Speed. It presented a combination of Speed and Power far superior to any naval force at the disposal of the Germans. In the first instance, most of the light cruisers belonged to the *Town* class and could not steam more than 27 knots; but the *Arethusas* were now coming rapidly into commission, and would effectually improve the speed of the squadrons. In order to form this Fleet I telegraphed to the Commonwealth Government, asking them to place the *Australia* at our disposal. This they did with the utmost goodwill and characteristic loyalty to the general interest.

* * * * *

My relations with the First Sea Lord continued pleasant, intimate and always frank. They cannot be better followed in this period of increasing tension than in our correspondence. His comments on a report from Sofia showed that we both viewed the Bulgarian question from the same angle:—

Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.

February 26, 1915.

As I have always (*before the Balkan War and when Admiral in the Mediterranean*) been an '*out and out*' Bulgarian, this paper has my deepest sympathy and fullest concurrence with the Bulgarian Minister of War. We have done nothing else this whole war but lose opportunities! As I told you last night, the one most awful thing in war is '*the careful man*'! He's the man with the *one talent!* Shove him into outer darkness where there is grinding and gnashing of teeth!

March 3, 1915.

First Lord.

I concur in your proposal to remit this question [the projected attack upon Borkum] for careful study by Sir A. K.

Wilson, with whom I have on many occasions discussed it in general terms. (*The whole problem depends on the efficiency of our arrangements for protection against submarines—an effective means of protection is not yet in sight.*)

This operation would necessarily await the trend of events in the Dardanelles. We must know what forces remain before embarking on a new undertaking.

We are now committed to the Dardanelles at all costs so must anyhow wait till Middle of May, by which time events in Holland may quite change the position and indicate Terschelling as our base.[1]

March 4, 1915.

* * * * *

The more I consider the Dardanelles the less I like it! No matter what happens it is impossible to send out anything more, not even a dinghy! and why the hostile submarine has not appeared is a wonder.

March 12, 1915.

* * * * *

W. R. Hall[2] came to me last night with this idea:—The German best battleships rush the Dover Straits (dropping mines behind them) and get [to] the Dardanelles and gobble up our ships *and then refuge at Constantinople!* Colliers *en route* arranged at Cartagena if necessary, *and Jellicoe* PERFORCE *more than 24 hours behind all the way!* Afterwards they (the Germans) gobble up the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea and bombard as convenient Odessa! Varna! Constantinople!!! etc., etc. . . .

MORAL.—*Carden to press on!* and Kitchener to occupy the deserted forts at extremity of Gallipoli and mount howitzers there. . . .

March 16, 1915.

* * * * *

The decisive theatre remains and ever will be the North Sea. Our attention is being distracted. Schleswig-Holstein and the Baltic are not living with us now. . . .

[1] In the event of Holland joining the Allies.

[2] Rear-Admiral Hall, the Director of the Intelligence Division.

March 19.

* * * * *

Let not our eyes be too much off the main theatre.

I hope Bax-Ironside[1] has prevented ammunition and submarines passing through to Constantinople.[2]

March 20, 1915.

Dardanelles.

16 English Destroyers.
6 Torpedo Boats.
6 French Destroyers.

28

I count up 28 destroyers and torpedo boats at Dardanelles, and in view of the very narrow entrance of the Dardanelles and restricted area of operations this is infinitely a bigger proportion than we have at home; but all the same we ought to press the French to send more destroyers and more light cruisers. It's ridiculous what little the French do! And what good [is] their keeping a force on the Syrian Coast? I have only one anxiety; the German and Austrian submarines—*when they appear the game will be up!* That's why I wish to press on the military co-operation and get a base at Cape Helles anyhow. It will be three weeks before the military can do anything according to present arrangements.

April 2, 1915.

* * * * *

Let us hope that the Dardanelles will be passed and over by the desired date to your honour and glory, and that the Bulgarians . . . will be . . . the first in . . . so getting Salonika and Kavalla and Macedonia generally as their reward! I EARNESTLY HOPE THIS MAY RESULT! Had the Greeks come in all would have been well without doubt. (Did you see that a Bulgarian General strongly urged an alternative disembarking place for our troops? *Does Kitchener know?*)

We cannot send another rope yarn even to de Robeck. WE HAVE GONE TO THE VERY LIMIT!!! And so they must not

[1] Our Minister at Bucharest, Roumania.
[2] *Via* Sofia.

hustle and should be distinctly and most emphatically told that no further reinforcements of the Fleet can be looked for! *A failure or check in the Dardanelles would be nothing. A failure in the North Sea would be ruin.* But I do not wish to be pessimistic, and let us hope that Gallipoli ain't going to be Plevna, or that de Robeck will be 'Duckworthed.' [1]

April 5, 1915.

* * * * *

From Maguire's report the *Inflexible* is far worse than *Lion*, so will be quite three months *hors de combat!* The war may be over by then if Holland comes in! I do not think you are sufficiently impressed by Cambon's warning as to Holland! *We ought to have every detail organised to move in a moment to Texel.* You are just simply eaten up with the Dardanelles and cannot think of anything else! Damn the Dardanelles! They will be our grave! . . .

* * * * *

On April 7 the Second, Third and Fourth Sea Lords asked Lord Fisher by minute to reassure them on certain points connected with the conduct of the war. Was he satisfied that we were not putting in jeopardy the principle that the Grand Fleet should be always in such a position and of such strength that it could be at all times ready to meet the entire Fleet of the enemy with confident assurance as to the result? The attack on the Dardanelles, they said, was probably from the

[1] In the year 1807 Admiral Duckworth, profiting by a favourable wind, accomplished the passage of the Dardanelles without difficulty, and the British Fleet entered the Sea of Marmora. He passed ten days in negotiations with the Turks, but never attempted to come within 10 miles of Constantinople. Meanwhile the Turks increased the fortifications of the Straits. Failing to get any satisfaction out of the enemy by threats and parleys, Admiral Duckworth thought it prudent to take advantage of a northerly wind and repassed the Straits successfully on March 1. He was heavily fired at on his return but lost no ships and only 150 men.

This episode is frequently cited as an example of the futility of forcing the Straits. The facts show clearly that it had no relation whatever to modern conditions either in regard to the difficulties of the passage up or down or to the consequences attendant upon success.

point of view of high policy quite correct, but could we afford the loss in ships and the expenditure on ammunition? They observed that we had already 'lost, or more or less demobilised, ten battleships (including *Inflexible*).' It was true they were mostly old ones and that, on the other hand, we had added and should shortly add seven. The Germans, however, had lost none and had added six.[1] Was the First Sea Lord satisfied with the rate of progress of battleship completion? Was the prospect of obtaining supplies of ammunition sufficiently good to ensure there being enough available for the use of the Grand Fleet in view of the expenditure involved by the operations in the Dardanelles? In conclusion the Sea Lords asked Lord Fisher to assure them that the whole policy had his concurrence, and that he was satisfied with it.

Lord Fisher replied formally by minute the same day. He stated that he was entirely in agreement with the fundamental principle of the maintenance of the strength of the Grand Fleet.

'The Dardanelles operation' (he continued), 'is undoubtedly one, the political result of which, if successful, will be worth some sacrifice in *matériel* and personnel; it will certainly shorten the period of the war by bringing in fresh Allies in the Eastern theatre, and will break the back of the German-Turkish alliance, besides opening up the Black Sea.

'It was with hesitation that I consented to this undertak-

[1] This is a good example of a certain class of arithmetic and of magnifying the enemy's strength. The maximum possible number of German Dreadnoughts in Home Waters in August, 1914, was 21. We had always credited the enemy with this figure, though we could hardly believe it. This meant that we assumed the 4 *Königs* and *Derfflinger* were all ready in August, 1914. On this basis only one other ship—*Lutzow*—could have been added to the German strength by April, 1915, and not 6 as the Sea Lords argued. On all our original calculations we had added a net 6 to the German 1.

In fact, however, the Germans did not have 21 Dreadnoughts ready in Home Waters in August, 1914, but only 16. They had added 5 since then—not to 21—but to 16. And their total numbers were 21 to 34.

ing, in view of the necessarily limited force of ships which could be devoted to it, of the shortage of shell and cordite, and of the factor of uncertainty which must always obtain when ships attack land fortifications and mined areas under their protection.

'But, as you state, these high points of policy must be decided by the Cabinet; and in this case the real advantages to be gained caused me eventually to consent to their view, subject to the strict limitation of the Naval Forces to be employed so that our position in the decisive theatre—the North Sea—should not be jeopardised in any one arm.

'I am of opinion at the present time that our supremacy is secure in Home Waters and that the forces detached are not such as to prejudice a decisive result should the High Seas Fleet come out to battle. But at the same time I consider that we have reached the absolute limit, and that we must stand or fall by the issue for we can send out no more help of any kind. I have expressed this view very clearly to the First Lord, and should there at a later period be any disposition on the part of the Cabinet to overrule me on this point, I shall request my Naval colleagues to give their support in upholding my view. . . .

'I am satisfied with the position at present and in the near future, but shall, of course, be more satisfied when we get the battleships back from the Dardanelles.

'The supply of cordite is very far from satisfactory. We cannot, however, stop the Dardanelles operations on this account and must accept the temporary reduction of the reserve of two outfits which it entails, exercising the greatest economy in expenditure of 15-inch and other critical calibres. But all extraneous sources of expenditure must be cut off at once.'[1]

The position of the First Sea Lord is thus very clearly defined. He is seen to be formally and deliberately identified

[1] In May, 1915, the Cordite position was as follows:—We had begun the war with 23,000 tons; we had fired away 1,500 tons; we had received 8,000 tons; and 13,000 tons were due by the end of the year. All the necessary measures to increase the supply still further had been taken by me in January and February and were now far advanced. See Appendix III, page 564.

with the enterprise. When notice was given of a Parliamentary question[1] asking whether the First Sea Lord had agreed to the attack of March 18, he wrote across the draft answer: 'If Lord Fisher had not approved of this operation, he would not now be First Sea Lord.' There is therefore no dispute upon the main issue. But it was not possible, having gone so far, to say, 'I will not send another rope yarn.' Great responsibilities had been incurred: a most serious operation impended; the Army was about to land. It was imperative that it should be properly supported. Subject to the paramount requirement of our safety in the North Sea, everything that was needed and could reasonably be spared, had to be given. Admiral de Robeck now telegraphed for a number of officers to assist in the landing. Lord Fisher was reluctant to accede to this request, and wished also to impose restrictions upon the employment not only of the *Queen Elizabeth*, but also of the *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson*, which would to a very large extent have deprived the Army of their support. I could not honourably agree to this, and my view was accepted. But every officer, every man, every ship, every round of ammunition required for the Dardanelles, became a cause of friction and had to be fought for by me, not only with the First Sea Lord but to a certain extent with his naval colleagues. The labour of this was enormous, but although in the end I allowed no request which reached me from the Fleet to pass unheeded, the process was exhausting. I have no doubt that many requests perished before they reached me, or were not proffered because it was known they would not be welcome. All the time there were ample supplies of ammunition and many powerful naval reinforcements available which could have been sent without affecting our security in the North Sea. This is proved by the fact that they were subsequently sent on a far greater scale than was now in question, without evil

[1] Not eventually put.

consequences or undue risk and by a different Board of Admiralty.

I did my best to allay the anxieties of the Sea Lords about ammunition without paralysing the operations.

April 18, 1915.

Secretary.

. . . I agree that only the supreme need of the Army could justify any slackening in naval production or diversion of supplies—even in 12 and 14 pr. ammunition; and that no decision to this effect should be taken without a formal Board decision.

The Bombarding Ships as a rule do not fire the Grand Fleet ammunition. Where one ship or one or two monitors are concerned I cannot agree that in one specific class of ammunition a rigid rule should be maintained and should be held to spoil operations by which the fate of the war is vitally affected. But on the general principle of the reserve for Grand Fleet ships not being reduced below what it was at the outbreak of war, I am, subject to the exceptions above mentioned, fully agreed.

If my naval colleagues would like to discuss this matter at a Board meeting, they should tell the Secretary and I will have it put on the agenda for Thursday.

W. S. C.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.

April 11, 1915.

A telegram has been sent (enclosed) about *Queen Elizabeth*. Personally I think it superfluous, but since you wish it I concur.

I do not consider that at this critical moment it would be right to harass the Admiral by imposing any restrictions on his use of *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson*.

There is no reason for withdrawing your confidence from him because of the *Inflexible*.[1] He had already ordered *Canopus* to go the whole way with her, when you very prudently telegraphed. Anyhow, I am told by the experts that either *Talbot* or *Canopus* could equally carry away any available hawsers.

[1] This refers to the sending and convoy of the *Inflexible* to Gibraltar for repairs.

It appears to me indispensable to send the Admiral Captain Phillimore and the officers he requires for the vital and critical operation of landing the troops. See his last telegram. I am sure you will agree that this authorisation should go first thing to-morrow. It ought to have gone to-night; but I do not wish to act without you even in the smallest matter.

Seriously, my friend, are you not a little unfair in trying to spite this operation by side winds and small points when you have accepted it in principle? It is hard on me that you should keep on like this—every day something fresh: and it is not worthy of you or the great business we have in hand together.

You know how deeply anxious I am to work with you. Had the Dardanelles been excluded, our co-operation would have been impossible. It is not right now to make small difficulties or add to the burden which in these times we have to bear.

Excuse frankness—but friends have this right, and to colleagues it is a duty.

Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.

April 12, 1915.

I did not get your upbraiding letter till after I had written to you about *Inflexible* being repaired at Gibraltar, which still seems desirable.

Never in all my whole life have I ever before so sacrificed my convictions as I have done to please you !—THAT'S A FACT ! Whoever told you that the *Talbot* was as good as a battleship to tow *Inflexible*[1] must have been hypnotised by you—nor is it correct that de Robeck had given orders before the Admiralty telegram. Off my own bat I suggested the immediate despatch of *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* (hoping they would shield *Elizabeth* and *Inflexible!*). De Robeck will hoist his flag in the *Lord Nelson* you may be sure, instead of the *Vengeance*, his former Flagship. For the work in hand the *Vengeance* quite as good for close action. Nevertheless I say no more. The outside world is quite certain that I have pushed you, and not you me ! So far as I know the Prime Minister is the solitary person who knows to the contrary. I have not

[1] I had not said this; but only that the *Talbot* would equally have carried away the available hawsers.

said one word to a soul on the subject except to Crease[1] and Wilson and Oliver and Bartolomé, and you may be sure these four never open their mouths!

Indirectly I've worked up Kitchener from the very beginning *via* Fitzgerald.

I think it's going to be a success, but I want to lose the oldest ships and to be chary of our invaluable officers and men for use in the decisive theatre.

April 25, 1915.

I am quite sick about our submarines and mines and not shooting at Zeppelins (who never can go higher than 2,000 yards and light cruisers bound to bring them down). Really yesterday had it not been for the Dardanelles forcing me to stick to you through thick and thin I would have gone out of the Admiralty never to return, and sent you a postcard to get Sturdee up at once in my place. You would then be quite happy!!!

* * * * *

Since the beginning of the year the disquietude of several of the principal members of the War Council about the supply of munitions for the Army had been continually increasing. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour, who with Lord Kitchener and me were members of a Cabinet Committee set up in January to investigate the position, were insistent that the measures of the War Office were in no way proportioned to our needs. Many hundreds of thousands of men had joined the colours and were now in training. The expansion of the British Army to 70 or even to 100 divisions had been designed, yet rifles had not been ordered to supply more than two-thirds of the men actually recruited. The orders placed for artillery were utterly inadequate. The new and special requirements of the war seemed still further neglected. No effective organisation for the production of machine guns on the scale on which they were needed had been even planned. The supplies of shell of all kinds, particularly high explosive, and the provision of

[1] Captain Crease, Naval Assistant to the First Sea Lord.

medium and heavy artillery were on a pitifully small scale. The manufacture of trench-mortars, bombs, and hand grenades was hardly begun.

When complaint was made to Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War and his advisers replied that every factory and source of supply was working to its utmost power, and that the orders already given were far in excess of the capacity to produce, and that the deliveries even of the reduced amounts were enormously in arrear. This was true, but not exhaustive. It was urged that measures out of all proportion to anything previously conceived must be taken to broaden the sources of supply. The War Office replied that they had already done everything that was possible at the moment, and that the fruits of their exertions would not be apparent for many months. They adduced a great number of examples of their action and showed the orders they were placing abroad, principally in America and Japan. All this was still regarded as quite insufficient, and the argument on both sides became fierce.

The critics contended that the Ordnance and Contract branches of the War Office knew nothing whatever about the production of munitions on the gigantic scale required, and that they were far too small and weak a body to deal with these immense and complicated problems of manufacture and industry. They pointed out that the War Office specifications drawn in the leisurely and thrifty days of peace were so arbitrary and narrow that they aggravated the difficulties of mass production, and were at the moment in some cases arresting the whole supply of certain weapons. For instance, the specifications for the wheels of the field guns were so particular that only one firm was able to produce them; the wood chosen for the rifle stocks was of a kind most limited and difficult to obtain; the fuses of the shells were needlessly complex, etc. To this the War Office rejoined that they could not put inferior weapons in the hands of the troops, that soldiers alone could

be the judges of the quality, character and quantity of the weapons and equipment of the Army. They declared they could not take the responsibility of allowing these vital matters to pass out of the domain of the professional soldiers into the hands of civilians, politicians or business men, however well meaning and enthusiastic. Thus on both sides the fires were banked up, and temperature and pressure rose together.

The stress increased with every week that passed. The demands of the Army grew incessantly. Each new division that took the field began to consume munitions of every kind on growing scales. Great numbers of troops at home were seen utterly unequipped. From the front flowed a torrent of complaints. Simultaneously the outputs fell hopelessly below the promises of the contractors. Lord Kitchener dreaded to send fresh divisions to the front even when they were equipped, for fear of revealing still further the inadequacy of the main plant by which they could be nourished. He made every conceivable personal exertion, but nothing in his training as a soldier or as an administrator had fitted him to organise this mighty and novel sphere. His assistants were few and rigid, and he himself took a strict view of the importance of military control.

From the indignation which was freely expressed to me by my colleagues during this month of April, I could not doubt that an explosion of a very violent kind was approaching. The Admiralty was in an easier position. We had maintained in peace incomparably the largest Navy in the world, and our sources of supply were upon the same scale. The British Army, on the other hand, was based on Arsenals narrowly measured by our tiny peace establishments. The Navy had expanded from a broad basis to perhaps double its size; the Army from its restricted basis had been called upon to expand to the equivalent of ten or fifteenfold. At the outbreak of the war we had placed very large orders for everything that the Navy needed with the great firms and dock-

yards which stood behind the Fleet. I had kept alive the Coventry Works by special measures in 1913, thus giving us a new additional source of heavy gun production. Even before Lord Fisher came to the Admiralty in November, 1914, we had set on foot, in accordance with maturely considered pre-war plans, a great volume of production. The old Admiral's impulse and inspiration supervened on this with cumulative effect. We were thus able, readily and easily, to cope with the developments which the course of the war and the progress of invention required. Already in January and February we were at full blast, and on the whole well ahead with our work in every department. Our task had not been comparable in difficulty with that of the War Office. In fact our very efficiency by absorbing much of the existing capacity for armament production aggravated their troubles. Still, the fact remained that the War Office were not solving their problems, and that there was no prospect of their doing so upon the existing lines.

Growing wrath and fear were not confined to the War Council. Lord Kitchener's embarrassments compelled him to restrict in the most drastic terms the demands of the Armies in the field in respect of all the supplies they needed most. He saw himself forced to give rulings upon the proportion of machine guns, high explosive shell and heavy artillery which seemed absurd and almost wicked to those who did not know his difficulties. Tension grew between the staff at General Headquarters and the War Office. The Army at the front carried its complaints through innumerable channels to Parliament and the Press; and though patriotism and the censorship prevented public expression, the tide of anxiety and anger rose day by day.

Well would it have been if in the solemn moment when we first drew the sword, a National Government resting on all parties had been formed. In those August days when our peaceful and, but for the Navy, almost unarmed people stood

forth against the Aggressor, all hearts beat together. There was a unity and comradeship never after equalled. All were ardent for the Cause, and there had been no time to make mistakes in method. Then was the moment to have proclaimed National Government and National Service together. This was certainly my wish. But the moment was lost. The Conservative Party, its power magnified in the atmosphere of war, was left free from all responsibility to watch the inevitable mistakes, shortcomings, surprises and disappointments which the struggle had in store. Its leaders had held themselves hitherto under a public-spirited restraint, silent but passionate spectators. They could endure the strain no longer. Thus both from within and from without, at the War Office and in the Admiralty, in France and at the Dardanelles, tension grew into crisis, and crisis rose to climax.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE OF THE BEACHES[1]

April 25, 1915

Description of the Gallipoli Peninsula—Three Main Alternatives—Problems of Attack and Defence—The Twenty-fifth of April—At the Turkish Headquarters—Liman von Sanders's Principal Apprehension—'V' Beach—'W' Beach—'X' Beach—The Anzac Landing—Mustapha Kemal—A Bitter Struggle—April 26 at Helles—Exhaustion of both Sides—Absence of British Reserves—The Turkish Counter Attack Repulsed—The Need for Reinforcements—Battle of May 7–9—The Advance Arrested—Trench Warfare Supervenes.

THE Gallipoli Peninsula stretches into the Ægean Sea for 52 miles and is at its broadest 12 miles across.[2] But *its ankle*, the Isthmus which joins it to the Mainland, is only 3½ miles wide near the village of Bulair; and at *its neck* opposite Maidos at the south-western end the width is scarcely 6 miles. This very considerable area is mountainous, rugged, and broken by ravines. Four main hill features dominate the ground: the semi-circular chain of hills surrounding Suvla Bay rising to 600 or 700 feet; the Sari Bair Mountain just over a thousand feet high; the Kilid Bahr Plateau opposite the Narrows between 600 and 700 feet high; and about 6 miles from the south-western tip the peak of Achi Baba, also 700 feet high.

Outside the Straits the landing-places are comparatively few. The cliffs fall precipitously to the sea and are pierced only by occasional narrow gullies. The surface of the Peninsula is covered for the most part with scrub, interspersed with

[1] See Map of The Turkish Theatre facing page 546.

[2] See Map and Plan of Helles and Anzac facing page 340. The General Map of The Turkish Theatre will also be useful.

patches of cultivation. A considerable supply of water in springs and wells exists throughout the region, particularly in the neighbourhood of Suvla Bay. One other feature of practical significance requires to be noted. The tip of the Peninsula from Achi Baba to Cape Helles has the appearance from the sea of being a gradual slope, but in fact this all-important tip is spoon-shaped and thus to a very large extent protected by its rim from direct naval fire.

The operations which were now to take place presented to both sides the most incalculable and uncertain problems of War. To land a large army in the face of a long-warned and carefully prepared defence by brave troops and modern weapons was to attempt what had never yet been dared and what might well prove impossible. On the other hand, the mysterious mobility of amphibious power imposed equal perils and embarrassments upon the defenders. General Liman von Sanders knew, as we have seen, that an army estimated at between 80,000 and 90,000 men was being concentrated at Mudros, in Egypt or close at hand. Where and when would they strike? There were obviously three main alternatives, any one of which might lead to fatal consequences—the Asiatic shore, the Bulair Isthmus and the Southern end of the Peninsula. Of these the Asiatic shore gave the best prospects for the landing and manœuvring of a large army. The Bulair Isthmus, if taken, cut the communications of all the troops on the Peninsula both by land and sea, and thus in von Sanders's words 'afforded the prospect of a strategic decision.' Thirdly, to quote von Sanders, 'The strip of coast on each side of Gaba Tebe was the landing place best suited to obtaining a quick decision, as a broad depression interrupted by only one gentle rise led straight from it to Maidos.'[1] There were also at the Southern end of the Peninsula the landing places in the neighbourhood of Cape Helles giving access to the peak of Achi Baba whence the forts on the Narrows were directly com-

[1] Liman von Sanders: 'Five Years in Turkey,' page 80.

manded. The enemy had no means of knowing which of these widely separated and potentially decisive objectives would receive the impending attack. To meet this uncertain, unknown, unknowable and yet vital situation the German Commander was forced to divide the 5th Turkish Army into three equal parts, each containing about 20,000 men and 50 guns. Whichever part was first attacked must hold out for two or three days against superior numbers until help could come. To minimise this perilous interval the communications between the three parts had been, as we have seen, improved as far as possible. Roads had been made and boats and shipping accumulated at suitable points in the Straits. Nevertheless the fact remained that Liman von Sanders must resign himself to meet in the first instance the whole of the Allied Army with one-third of his own already equal forces, and nearly three days must elapse after battle was thus joined before any substantial Turkish reinforcements could arrive.

In fact, however, the British Commander had fewer alternatives open to him than those which Liman von Sanders was bound to take into account. Sir Ian Hamilton was under injunctions from Lord Kitchener not to involve his army in an extensive campaign in Asia, for which he had neither the numbers nor the land transport. The resources of the Navy in small craft were judged not to be sufficient at this time to maintain a large army landed at Enos, sixty or seventy miles from its base at Mudros, to assault Bulair. Thus there remained in practice only the Southern end of the Peninsula open to the Allied attack. But as von Sanders could not know this, he must still continue to provide against all three contingencies. The issue, therefore, on the eve of battle narrowed itself down to a three days' struggle between the whole Anglo-French forces available, or whatever more these Governments had chosen to make available, and the 20,000 Turks who with their 50 guns were occupying the Southern end of the Gallipoli Peninsula. To get ashore and crush or wear down

these 20,000 men, and to seize the decisive positions they guarded near the Narrows, was the task of Sir Ian Hamilton; and for this purpose he had in his hand about 60,000 men and whatever support might be derived from the enormous gun power of the Fleet. It was a grimly balanced trial of strength for life and death.

The first incalculable hazard was the landing under fire. This might well fail altogether. It was not inconceivable that most of the troops might be shot in the boats before they even reached the shore. No one could tell. But if the landing were successful, the next peril fell upon the Turks: they had for at least three days to try to hold out against superior forces. How superior no Turk could tell. It had rested entirely with Lord Kitchener how many men he would employ. If, however, the British and French forces were too few and the Turkish defence was maintained for three days, then the balance of advantage would turn against the Allies. After the third or fourth day the attackers would have expended their priceless treasure of surprise. Their choice would be disclosed and they would be committed almost irrevocably to it. Large reinforcements would reach the Turks; strong entrenchments would be completed; and ultimately the invaders would have to meet the main forces of Turkey which could gradually be brought against them from all parts of the Ottoman Empire. Rapidity and Intensity of execution at the outset were therefore the essential of any sound plan.

* * * * *

At daybreak on April 25 Sir Ian Hamilton began his descent upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. The story of the Battle of the Beaches has been often told and will be often told again. From the sombre background of the Great War with its inexhaustible sacrifices and universal carnage this conflict stands forth in vivid outline. The unique character of the operations, the extraordinary amphibious spectacle, the degree of

swiftly fatal hazard to which both armies were simultaneously exposed, the supreme issues at stake, the intensely fierce resolve of the soldiers—Christian and Moslem alike—to gain a victory the consequences of which were comprehended in every rank—all constitute an episode which history will long discern. It would not be fitting here to recount the feats of arms which signalised the day. To do them justice a whole volume would be required: each Beach deserves a chapter; each battalion, a page. Only the principal features and their consequences can here be traced.

Sir Ian Hamilton's plan comprised two main converging attacks on the Southern end of the Peninsula: the first by the 29th Division at five separate simultaneous landings in the vicinity of Cape Helles, the second by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps near Gaba Tebe opposite Maidos. Both these attacks would have become related in the event of either making substantial progress, and both drew upon the resources of the two Turkish divisions which alone were available at this end of the Peninsula. In addition the French were to make a landing on the Asiatic shore near the ruins of Troy to effect a temporary diversion, and the Royal Naval Division in transports accompanied by warships pretended to be about to land at Bulair.

* * * * *

Liman von Sanders has described in rugged sentences the scene at the Turkish Headquarters in the town of Gallipoli when in the early morning the news of the invasion arrived.

From 5 a.m. onward on April 25 reports of great landings of enemy troops already begun or about to begin followed rapidly one on another. In the south, beginning on the Asiatic side, the 11th Division reported great concentration of enemy warships and transports in and off the Great and Little Besika Bays, and a landing threatening. Somewhat further north, at Kum Kale, the outposts of the 3rd Division were

already in lively combat with the French troops which had landed there covered by the fire of numerous French warships. At the southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula . . . strong British forces fought the outposts of the 9th Division for possession of the landing places. The whole stretch of coast here and its hinterland lay under the fierce fire of large calibre British naval guns. At Gaba Tepe and on the side of the previously mentioned Maidos Gap, troops were being disembarked from British warships, whilst enemy warships lying in a half circle searched the ground in rear with the fire of the largest calibres. Near us, in the upper Gulf of Xeros, numerous warships and transports were approaching the coasts. From there also the roar of continuous gunfire was soon plainly to be heard. It was evident from the white faces of the reporting officers at this early hour that, although a hostile landing had been fully expected, its occurrence at so many places at once had surprised most of them and filled them with apprehension.

'My first feeling,' he adds with some complacency (for he was completely deceived as to which were the true and which the feint attacks), 'was that there was nothing to alter in our dispositions. The enemy had selected for landing those places which we ourselves had considered would be the most probable and had defended with especial care.' He proceeded forthwith to where he considered the greatest danger lay. 'Personally I had to remain for the present at Bulair, since it was of the utmost importance that the Peninsula should be kept open at that place.' Thither he also ordered immediately the 7th Division encamped near the town of Gallipoli. All day long, in spite of the news that reached him of the desperate struggle proceeding at the other end of the Peninsula, he held this Division and the 5th intact close to the Bulair lines. It was only in the evening that he convinced himself that the ships and transports gathered in the Bay of Xeros were intended as a feint, and even then he dared only to despatch by water five battalions from this vital spot to the aid of his hard pressed forces beyond Maidos. Not until the

morning of the 26th, twenty-four hours after the landings had begun, could he bring himself to order the remainder of the 5th and 7th Divisions to begin their voyage from Bulair to Maidos, where they could not arrive before the 27th. Thus in his own words 'the upper part of the Gulf of Xeros was almost completely denuded of Turkish troops,' and finally only 'a depot Pioneer Company and some Labour battalions' occupied empty tents along the ridge. 'The removal of all the troops from the coast of the upper part of the Gulf of Xeros,' he writes, 'was a serious and responsible decision on my part in the circumstances, but it had to be risked in view of the great superiority of the enemy in the Southern part of the Peninsula. Had the British noted this weakness they might well have made great use of it.'

Nothing more clearly reveals the vital character of the Turkish communications across the Isthmus of Bulair than the solicitude for them manifested at this juncture by this highly competent soldier. It is well to ponder in the light of this fact upon Lord Kitchener's observation, 'Once the Fleet has passed the Straits the position on the Gallipoli Peninsula ceases to be of importance.'

* * * * *

We must return to the Battle of the Beaches.[1] Of the five landings in the neighbourhood of Cape Helles that of the 88th Brigade on 'V' Beach close to the ruined fort of Sedd-el-Bahr was intended to be the most important. Over two thousand men of the Dublin and Munster Fusiliers and of the Hampshire regiment packed in the hold of the *River Clyde*, a steamer specially prepared for landing troops, were carried to within a few yards of the shore. It had been planned to bridge the intervening water space by two lighters or barges. Along this causeway the troops were to rush company by company on to the Beach. At the same time the rest of the Dub-

[1] See map of Helles facing page 340.

lin Fusiliers approached the shore in boats. There were scarcely more than four or five hundred Turks to oppose this assault, but these were skilfully concealed in the cliffs and ruined buildings reinforced by a good many machine guns and protected by mines and wire both in the water and ashore. As the Irish troops rushed from the hold of the *River Clyde*, or as the boats reached the submerged barbed wire, an annihilating fire burst upon them from all parts of the small amphitheatre. The boats were checked by the wire or by the destruction of their rowers. The lighters, swayed by the current, were with difficulty placed and kept in position. In a few minutes more than half of those who had exposed themselves were shot down. The boats, the lighters, the gangways, the water, and the edge of the beach were heaped or crowded with dead and dying. Nevertheless the survivors struggled forward through the wire and through the sea, some few reaching the beach, while successive platoons of Dublin and Munster Fusiliers continued to leap from the hold of the *River Clyde* into the shambles without the slightest hesitation until restrained by superior authority. Commander Unwin and the small naval staff responsible for fixing the lighters, and indeed for the plan of using the *River Clyde*, persevered in their endeavours to secure their lighters and lay down gangways unremittingly in the deadly storm, while others struggled with unsurpassed heroism to save the drowning and dying or to make their way armed to the shore. The scenes were enacted once again which Napier has immortalised in the breaches of Badajoz. Nothing availed. The whole landing encountered a bloody arrest. The survivors lay prone under the lip of the beach, and but for the fire of the machine guns of Commander Wedgwood's armoured car squadron which had been mounted in the bows of the *River Clyde*, would probably have been exterminated. The Brigadier, General Napier, being killed, the whole attempt to land at this point was suspended until dark.

Fighting scarcely less terrible had taken place at 'W' Beach. Here the Lancashire Fusiliers, after a heavy bombardment from the Fleet, were towed and rowed to the shore in thirty or forty cutters. Again the Turks reserved their fire till the moment when the leading boats touched the beach. Again its effects were devastating. Undeterred by the most severe losses from rifle and machine gun fire, from sea mines and land mines, this magnificent battalion waded through the water, struggled through the wire, and with marvellous discipline actually reformed their attenuated line along the beach. From this position they were quite unable to advance, and this attack also would have been arrested, but for a fortunate accident. The boats containing the company on the left had veered away towards some rocks beneath the promontory of Cape Tekke. Here the soldiers landed with little loss, and climbing the cliffs fell upon the Turkish machine guns which were sweeping the beach and bayonetted their gunners. Profiting by this relief, the remainder of the battalion already on the beach managed to make their way to the shelter of the cliffs, and climbing them established themselves firmly on their summit. Here at about nine o'clock they were reinforced by the Worcesters, and gradually from this direction the foothold won was steadily extended during the day.

Still further to the left the Royal Fusiliers had landed at 'X' Beach, admirably supported at the closest ranges by the *Implacable* (Captain H. C. Lockyer). They were followed by the Inniskillings and the Border Regiment, and by fierce fighting and a resolute charge carried the high ground above Cape Tekke, thus establishing connection with the troops from 'W' Beach.

A mile to the left of 'X' Beach again, two battalions of Marines were landed without a single casualty at 'Y.' These were attacked at nightfall, and early the next morning signalled for boats and re-embarked. They, however, drew to their neighbourhood important Turkish forces, and thus for

a time aided the other attacks. At the other end of the line, at 'S' Beach, on the extreme right near the old fort called De Totts Battery, another battalion was easily landed and maintained an isolated position. When darkness fell, the remaining troops in the *River Clyde* managed to get ashore without further loss, and gradually secured possession of the edge of 'V' Beach and some broken ground on either side of it. Thus when the day ended lodgments had been effected from all the five Beaches attacked, and about 9,000 men had been put on shore. Of these at least 3,000 were killed or wounded, and the remainder were clinging precariously to their dear-bought footholds and around the rim of the Peninsula. We must now turn to the second main attack.

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It had been intended to land the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps near Gaba Tepe[1] with the purpose of striking across the neck of the Peninsula towards Maidos. In contrast to the landings of the 29th Division at Helles, this all-important descent was to take place before dawn and without artillery preparation. It was hoped that while the Turkish forces were involved at the end of Peninsula with the 29th Division, the Anzacs would make great headway in its most vulnerable part. The arrangements provided for successive landings from boats and launches, aided by destroyers, of 1,500 men at a time. A rugged and difficult spot half a mile north of Gaba Tepe, unlikely to be elaborately defended, was chosen for the landing. In the dark the long tows of boats missed their direction and actually reached the coast a mile further to the north, entering a small bay steeply overhung by cliffs till then called Ari Burnu, but in future Anzac Cove. This accident led the attack to a point quite unexpected by the defenders. The actual landing was made with little loss, and the foot of the cliffs proved in practice well sheltered from artillery fire.

[1] See Map of Anzac and Suvla Bay facing page 474.

On the other hand it carried the Australian advance away from the broad depression from Gaba Tepe to Maidos into the tangled and confused underfeatures and deep ravines radiating in all directions from the mountain of Sari Bair. It also still further separated the Anzac attack from that of the 29th Division at Cape Helles.

As the flotilla approached the shore a scattered fire from the Turkish pickets rang out; but the Australians leaping from the boats into the water or on to the beach scrambled up the cliffs and rocks, driving the Turks before them in the dim but growing light of dawn. The destroyers were close at hand with another 2,500 men, and in scarcely half an hour upward of 4,000 men had been landed. The skirmish developing constantly into an action rolled inland towards the sunrise, and by daylight considerable progress had been made. By half-past seven, 8,000 men in all had been landed. In spite of rifle and artillery fire which steadily increased against the beach, by two o'clock the whole infantry of the leading Australian Division 12,000 strong, and two batteries of Indian mounted artillery, were ashore occupying a semi-circular position of considerable extent. The 2d Division including a New Zealand brigade followed, and within a period of twenty-four hours in all 20,000 men and a small proportion of artillery were effectively landed.

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The two Turkish divisions who were left without help of any sort to face the onslaught of the Allied Army were shrewdly disposed. Nine battalions of the 9th Division guarded the likely landing places around the coast from Gaba Tepe to Morto Bay; the remaining three battalions of that Division and the nine battalions forming the 19th Division were all held concentrated in reserve near Maidos. At the head of the 19th Division there stood in this strange story a Man of Destiny. Mustapha Kemal Bey had on April 24 ordered his

best regiment, the 57th, a field exercise for the next morning in the direction of the high mountain of Sari Bair (Hill 971) and, as Fate would have it, these three battalions stood drawn up on parade when at 5.30 a.m. the news of the first landings came in. A later message reported that about one British battalion had landed near Ari Burnu and were marching upon Sari Bair. Both Sami Pasha, who commanded at the Southern end of the Peninsula, and Sanders himself regarded the landing at Ari Burnu as a feint, and Mustapha Kemal was ordered merely to detach a single battalion to deal with it. But this General instantly divined the power and peril of the attack. On his own authority he at once ordered the whole 57th Regiment, accompanied by a Battery of Artillery, to march to meet it. He himself on foot, map in hand, set off across country at the head of the leading company. The distance was not great, and in an hour he met the Turkish covering forces falling back before the impetuous Australian advance. He at once ordered his leading battalion to deploy and attack, and himself personally planted his mountain Battery in position. Forthwith—again without seeking higher authority—he ordered his 77th Regiment to the scene. By ten o'clock, when the Turkish Commander-in-Chief galloped on to the field, practically the whole of the Reserves in the Southern part of the Peninsula had been drawn into the battle, and ten battalions and all the available artillery were in violent action against the Australians.[1]

Bitter and confused was the struggle which followed. The long-limbed athletic Anzacs thrust inland in all directions with fierce ardour as they had sprung pell mell ashore from the boats, intent on seizing every inch of ground that they could. They now came in contact with extremely well handled and bravely led troops and momentarily increasing artillery fire. In the deep gulleys, among the rocks and scrub many small bloody fights were fought to the end. Quarter was neither

[1] This episode is well described in the Australian Official History.

asked nor given; parties of Australians cut off were killed to the last man; no prisoners wounded or unwounded were taken by the Turks.

Meanwhile on both sides reinforcements were being hurried into the swaying and irregular firing line. All through the day and all through the night the battle continued with increasing fury. In the actual fighting lines on both sides more than half the men engaged were killed or wounded. So critical did the position appear at midnight on the 25th, and so great was the confusion behind the firing line, that General Birdwood and the Australian Brigadiers advised immediate re-embarkation, observing that decision must be taken then or never. But at this juncture the Commander-in-Chief showed himself a truer judge of the spirit of the Australian troops than even their own most trusted leaders. Steady counsel being also given by Admiral Thursby, Sir Ian Hamilton wrote a definite order to 'Dig in and stick it out.' From that moment through all the months that followed the power did not exist in the Turkish Empire to shake from its soil the grip of the Antipodes.

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All through the night of April 26 the position at 'V' Beach continued critical. The landing place was still exposed to Turkish rifle fire, and a further advance was imperative if any results were to be achieved. Accordingly at dawn on the 26th, preceded by a heavy bombardment from the Fleet, the remnants of the Dublin and Munster Fusiliers and of the Hampshire Regiment were ordered to assault the castle and village of Sedd-el-Bahr. Undaunted by their losses and experiences, unexhausted by twenty-four hours of continuous fighting, these heroic troops responded to the call. By nine o'clock they had stormed the castle, and after three hours' house to house fighting made themselves masters of the village. A Turkish redoubt strongly held by the enemy lay beyond.

The wasted battalions paused before this new exertion, and the redoubt was subjected to a violent and prolonged bombardment by the battleship *Albion*. When the cannonade ceased the English and Irish soldiers mingled together, animated by a common resolve, issued forth from the shattered houses of Sedd-el-Bahr, and in broad daylight by main force and with cruel sacrifice stormed the redoubt and slew its stubborn defenders. The prolonged, renewed, and seemingly inexhaustible efforts of the survivors of these three battalions, their persistency, their will power, their physical endurance, achieved a feat of arms certainly in these respects not often, if ever surpassed in the history of either island race. The reorganisation of the troops at the water's edge, the preparation and inspiration of these successive assaults, are linked with the memory of a brave staff officer, Colonel Doughty-Wylie, who was killed like Wolfe in the moment of victory and whose name was given by the Army to the captured fort by which he lies.

As the result of these successes and of the continued pressure of the British attack from its various lodgments on the enemy, a continuous arc was established by the evening of the 26th along the whole coast from 'V,' 'W' and 'X' Beaches, and a junction was effected with the single battalion landed at 'S.' Profiting by the exhaustion, heavy losses and inferior numbers of the Turks, and reinforced by four French battalions, the Allies on the 27th converted this concave arc by a further advance into a line from a point about two miles north of Cape Tekke to De Totts Battery. The extreme tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula had thus been bitten off, all the Beaches were protected from rifle fire, and a substantial foothold had been established and consolidated upon land.

The rest of the 29th Division, the Royal Naval Division, and the French Division having landed during the 26th and 27th, Sir Ian Hamilton ordered on the 28th a general advance from the tip of the Peninsula towards Krithia Village. Although the Turks were beginning to receive reinforcements

and had reorganised, they considered this a very critical day. The troops which had opposed the landing had lost heavily. Their battalions were reduced to about 500 strong. By midday the whole of the Turkish reserves were engaged. The British and French, however, were not strong enough to make headway against the Turkish rifle fire. Once inland in the spoon-shaped dip the ships' guns could not help them much, and they had not had time to develop their own artillery support. By the evening of the 28th, therefore, a complete equipoise was reached. If, during the 28th and 29th, two or three fresh divisions of French, British, or Indian troops could have been thrown in, the Turkish defence must have been broken and the decisive positions would have fallen into our hands. And all the time the lines of Bulair lay vacant, naked, unguarded—the spoil of any fresh force which could now be landed from the sea. Where was the extra Army Corps that was needed? It existed. It was destined for the struggle. It was doomed to suffer fearful losses in that struggle. But now when its presence would have given certain victory, it stood idle in Egypt or England.

The next move lay with the Turks. Reinforcements were steadily and rapidly approaching the hard-pressed two Divisions. The leading regiments of the Divisions from Bulair were already arriving at intervals. The 15th Division was coming by sea from Constantinople to Kilia Liman. The 11th Division was crossing from the Asiatic shore. In this situation the 29th and 30th passed away without event.

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On the morning of the 27th we received at the Admiralty a telegram from Admiral de Robeck giving an account of the battle.

I took this across at once myself to Lord Kitchener. As soon as he saw that 29,000 men had been landed, he expressed the most lively satisfaction. He seemed to think that the

critical moment had passed, and that once the troops had got ashore in large numbers the rest would follow swiftly. But the news of the heavy losses that came in on the 28th, and the further telegrams which were received, showed the great severity and critical nature of the fighting. On this day, therefore, Lord Fisher and I repaired together to the War Office and jointly appealed to Lord Kitchener to send Sir Ian Hamilton large reinforcements from the troops in Egypt and to place other troops in England under orders to sail. Fisher pleaded eloquently and fiercely and I did my best. Lord Kitchener was at first incredulous that more troops could be needed, but our evident anxiety and alarm shook him. That evening he telegraphed to Sir John Maxwell and to Sir Ian Hamilton assigning an Indian Brigade and the 42d Territorial Division then in Egypt to the Dardanelles.

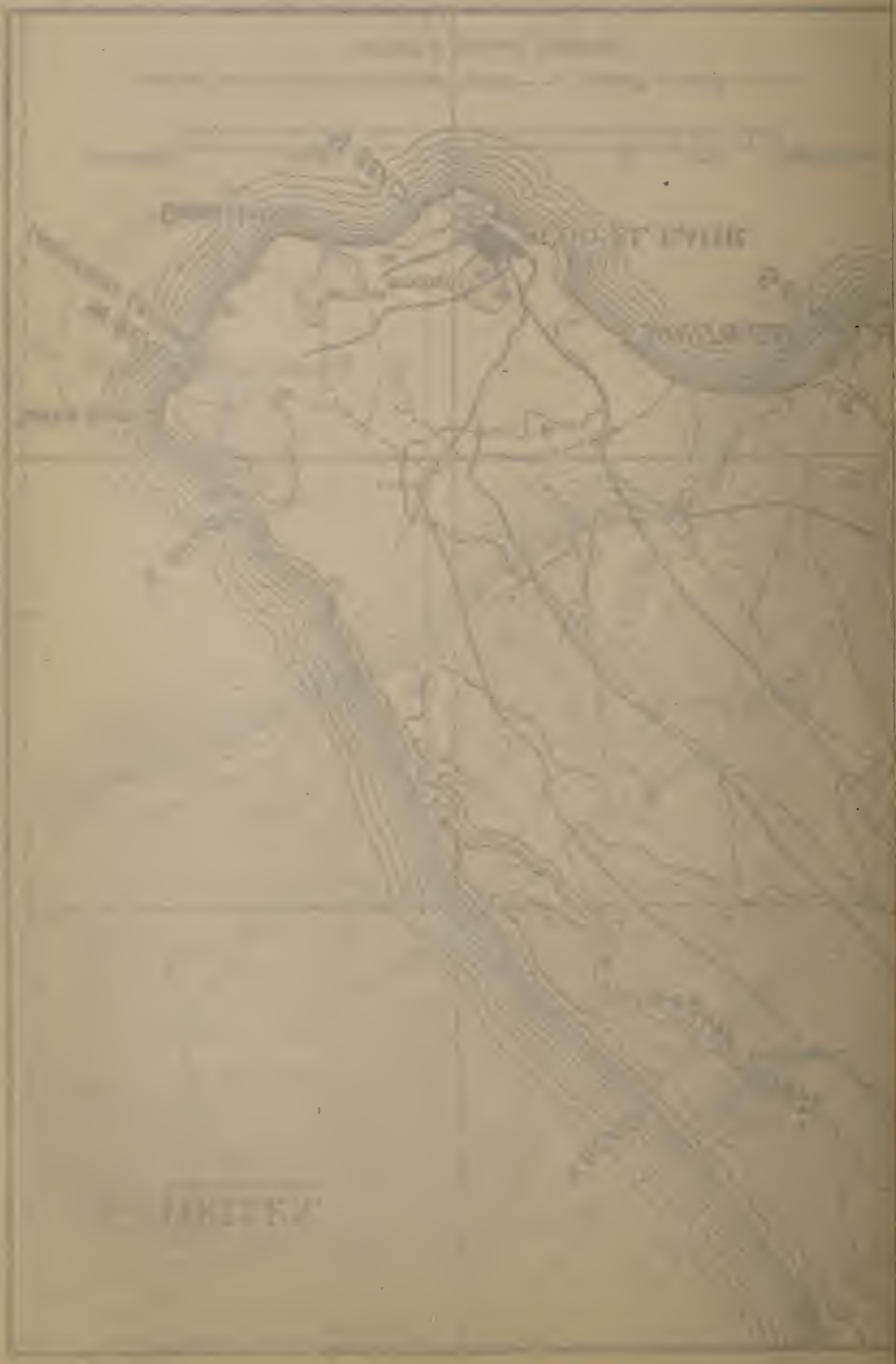
There was no reason whatever why these forces and others should not have been made available as a reserve to Sir Ian Hamilton before his attack was launched, in which case the preparations for bringing them to the Peninsula would have been perfected simultaneously with those of the attack and the transports could have carried them to the Peninsula the moment the beaches were ready for their reception. These reinforcements aggregating 12,000 or 13,000 rifles could have fought in the battle of the 28th or enabled it to be renewed at dawn on the 29th. In fact, however, the Indian Infantry Brigade did not land until May 1, and the leading brigade of the 42d Division did not disembark until May 5.

Meanwhile reinforcements from all quarters and artillery taken from the defences of the Straits were steadily reaching the Turks. By May 1 the local German Commander, Sodenstern, thought himself strong enough to begin a general counter-attack, and during the whole of the 1st, 2d, and 3d, he continued to thrust in his troops, wearied as they were either by march or battle, in a series of desperate and disconnected attempts to drive the Allies into the sea. But if Sir Ian Ham-

ilton's army was not strong enough to advance itself, neither could it be shaken from its positions. By May 3 the Turkish attacks had broken down completely with very heavy loss. The first wave of Turkish reinforcements had spent itself, and it was again the turn of the Allies. The organisation of the beaches had been established; supplies, artillery, and ammunition had been landed in considerable quantities. There was nothing to prevent a renewed general advance on the 4th or 5th against the discouraged Turks, had additional troops proportionate to the new situation been available. As it was the attack could not be begun until the 6th, and so short of troops was Sir Ian Hamilton that he found it necessary to withdraw the 2d Australian Brigade and the New Zealand Brigade from the Anzac area to Helles.

The new battle commenced on the morning of the 6th and was continued on the 7th and 8th. It was sustained by nearly 50,000 British and French troops with 72 guns, against which the Turks mustered approximately 30,000 men with 56 guns. The result was a great and bitter disappointment for the Allies. Only a few hundred yards were gained along the whole front. The losses both of the British and French had been very heavy. In all from the 25th to the cessation of the attack on the evening of the 8th, the British had lost nearly 15,000 killed and wounded and the French at least 4,000.

The situation disclosed on the morrow of this battle was grim. Sir Ian Hamilton's whole army was cramped and pinned down at two separate points on the Gallipoli Peninsula. His two main attacks, though joined by the sea, were now otherwise quite disconnected with each other. None of the decisive positions on the Peninsula were in our hands. A continuous line of Turkish entrenchments stood between the British and Achi Baba, and between the Australians and the mountain of Sari Bair or the town of Maidos. These entrenchments were growing and developing line upon line. The French having been withdrawn from Troy, the Turkish troops



HELLES.

FROM "GALLIPOLI DIARY" BY GENERAL SIR IAN HAMILTON

MAP III.

BY PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR AND THE PUBLISHERS, EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.

in Asia were free to reinforce the Peninsula. All the available British reserves, including the Indian Brigade and the 42d Division, had been thrown in and largely consumed after their opportunity had passed. The casualties in every battalion had been serious, and there was no means at hand of filling the gaps. Not even the regular 10 per cent reserve which follows automatically every division sent on active service had been provided for the 29th Division. On the 9th Sir Ian Hamilton reported that it was impossible to break through the Turkish lines with the forces at his disposal, that conditions of trench warfare had supervened, and that reinforcements of at least an Army Corps were needed. At least a month must intervene before the drafts needed to restore the Divisions already engaged and the large new forces plainly required could be obtained from home. What would happen in this month of continued wastage in the Allied Army and of unceasing growth in the Turkish power? Initiative and Opportunity had passed to the enemy. A long, costly struggle lay before us and far greater efforts would now certainly be required.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE LANDING

Effects of the Landing at Home and Abroad—Italy About to Enter the War—The Anglo-Franco-Italian Naval Convention—Resumption of the Allied Offensive in France—Battle of Aubers Ridge—A Casualty Clearing Station—The Sinking of the *Lusitania*—Consequences—On Board the *Queen Elizabeth*—Admiral de Robeck's Resolve—His Telegram of May 10—New Factors in the Decision—Apparition of the German Submarines—I Wish to Renew the Attack on the Minefields—Lord Fisher's Agitation—His Memorandum of May 11—Correspondence with Him—Disjointed Resolves—Withdrawal of the *Queen Elizabeth*—Lord Kitchener's Anger—His Dispute with Lord Fisher—An Arrangement Effected—Telegrams to Admiral de Robeck.

IN spite of the fact that the Army was brought to a standstill, the great event of the landing continued to produce its impression throughout Europe. Italy, Greece, Roumania, Bulgaria assumed that now that large allied forces were definitely ashore, they could and would be reinforced from the sea until the Turkish resistance was overcome. The Italian momentum towards war proceeded unchecked: and the Balkan states continued in an attitude of strained expectancy. At home the growing political crisis underwent a distinct setback. The leaders of the Opposition had been advised by high authorities in France that the operation of landing would fail and that the troops would be repulsed at the beaches with disastrous slaughter. They were of course greatly relieved when these predictions were falsified, and there was for the moment a corresponding easement of tension.

On May 5, while the battle on the Peninsula was still undecided, I had to go to Paris for a purpose of great importance. The negotiations with Italy which had been proceeding during

March and April had in its last fortnight assumed a decisive character. On April 26 the Treaty of London, by which Italy agreed to come into the war, had been signed. On May 4 Italy denounced the Triple Alliance, and thereby made public her change of policy. Sir Edward Grey had on medical advice taken a brief spell of rest at the beginning of April, and the Prime Minister for ten days grasped the Italian business in his own hands with downright vigour. On the Foreign Secretary's return the advantage gained had been zealously pursued. The terms of the secret treaty which resulted in the entry of Italy into the war have long since been made public. They reveal with painful clearness the desperate need of the three Allies at this juncture. Locked in the deadly struggle, with the danger of the Russian collapse staring them in the face, and with their own very existence at stake, neither Britain nor France was inclined to be particular about the price they would pay or promise to pay for the accession to the alliance of a new first-class power. The Italian negotiators, deeply conscious of our anxiety, were determined to make the most advantageous bargain they could for their country.

The territorial gains which Italy was to receive on her frontiers, in the Adriatic, and from the Turkish Empire were tremendous. These political prizes were to be supplemented by Military and Naval conventions of the utmost importance. The British Fleet was actively to co-operate with the Italians in the Adriatic, and the Russians were to continue a vigorous offensive with at least 500,000 men against Austria in Galicia. Thus guaranteed both by sea and land, Italy seemed safe to advance and appropriate the enormous prizes for which she had stipulated. The hopes and calculations which inspired these arrangements were soon to be falsified. Those who launch out upon the stormy voyage of war can never tell beforehand what its length or fortunes will be or in what port they will at last drop anchor. Within a fortnight of the signature of the Military Convention Mackensen had fallen

upon the Russians along the Dunajecs, the battle of Gorlice-Tarnau had been fought, and the Russian Armies were everywhere in retreat and recoil. The apparition of Yugo-Slavia as a strong new power at the end of the war rendered the conditions which Italy had exacted in the Adriatic obviously inapplicable. And lastly Turkey, beaten in the war, has risen resuscitated and virtually intact from the disasters of the peace. It was not to an easy war of limited liability and great material gains that Italian statesmen were to send their countrymen. Italy, like the other great combatants, was to be drenched with blood and tears. Year after year, her soil invaded, her manhood shorn away, her treasure spent, her life and honour in jeopardy, must she struggle on to a victory which was to bring no complete satisfaction to her ambitions. But though the calculations of statesmen had failed, the generous heart of the Italian nation proved not unequal to the long trials and disappointments of the struggle, nor unworthy to sustain amid its mocking fortunes the ancient fame of Rome.

As it seemed vital that no hitch nor delay should obstruct the signing of the Naval Convention, I proceeded to Paris armed on behalf of the Admiralty with plenary powers. The Italian apprehension was that if as the result of victory Russia established herself at Constantinople, and if Serbia also gained a great increase of territory, these combined Slavonic powers would develop a strong naval base on or off the Dalmatian coast. The prospect which had arisen from the Dardanelles operations, of Russia possessing Constantinople, forced Italy to make the greatest exertions to secure her own position in the Adriatic which would have been irretrievably compromised by an allied victory in which Italy had taken no part. We therefore spent two days in intricate discussions between the French and the Italians about the naval bases which Italy was to secure on the Dalmatian coast in the treaties following a victorious war. Among these their most important claim

was for what was called the Canal of Sabioncello. This strip of good anchorage for the largest vessels between two long islands, out of gunfire from the shore, and half-way down the Adriatic, presented indeed every ideal condition for an Italian Naval Base. But there were many other claims, and whenever the discussion seemed to prove discouraging to the Italians we threw the British trident into the scale, offering to agree to the request not only for cruisers and flotillas but for a squadron of battleships as well. Since it seemed that Admiral de Robeck had definitely abandoned the attempt to force the Dardanelles, his fleet had clearly ships to spare. In the end a complete agreement was reached between the naval authorities of the three countries. The Italians insisted on having British battleships, and the French without taking offence at this, agreed to replace a British Squadron taken from the Dardanelles by an equal number of their own vessels.

I left Paris early on the morning of the 7th, intending to pass a day at Sir John French's Headquarters on my way back to England. Arrived at St. Omer on the evening of the 7th, I learnt two things. Sir Ian Hamilton's telegrams showed that he was in full battle and that no decision was yet manifest on the Peninsula. Secondly, Sir John French intended to begin a general attack directed against the Aubers Ridge in conjunction with the French Army operating on his right against the Souchez position, and this momentous event was fixed for daybreak on the 9th. I therefore stayed to see one battle, glad to keep my mind off the other.

As the reader is aware, I was at this time convinced that the task set to the British and French troops was impossible. The Germans in their front were almost equal in strength, intensely fortified, and fully prepared. The preliminary wire cutting by shrapnel bombardment had shown them exactly the gaps through which the assaulting troops were to be launched, and one could not doubt that every preparation had been made to mow them down. Moreover the British supplies of shell were

extremely limited, and the high explosive needed to shatter the German trenches was practically non-existent. I made every effort in my power without incurring unjustifiable risks to view the battle. But neither far off from a lofty steeple nor close up on the fringe of the enemy's barrage was it possible to see anything except shells and smoke. Without actually taking part in the assault it was impossible to measure the real conditions. To see them you had to feel them, and feeling them might well feel nothing more. To stand outside was to see nothing, to plunge in was to be dominated by personal experiences of an absorbing kind. This was one of the cruellest features of the war. Many of the generals in the higher commands did not know the conditions with which their troops were ordered to contend, nor were they in a position to devise the remedies which could have helped them.

On the evening of this day I witnessed also the hideous spectacle of a large casualty clearing station in the height of a battle. More than 1,000 men suffering from every form of horrible injury, seared, torn, pierced, choking, dying, were being sorted according to their miseries into the different parts of the Convent at Merville. At the entrance the arrival and departure of the motor ambulances, each with its four or five shattered and tortured beings, was incessant: from the back door corpses were being carried out at brief intervals to a burying party constantly at work. One room was filled to overflowing with cases not worth sending any farther, cases whose hopelessness excluded them from priority in operations. Other rooms were filled with 'walking wounded' all in much pain, but most in good spirits. For these a cup of tea, a cigarette, and another long motor journey were reserved. An unbroken file of urgent and critical cases were pressed towards the operating room, the door of which was wide open and revealed as I passed the terrible spectacle of a man being trepanned. Everywhere was blood and bloody rags. Outside in the quadrangle the drumming thunder of the cannonade pro-

claimed that the process of death and mutilation was still at its height.

* * * * *

In these days also came in the news of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. This gigantic liner had for some months definitely returned to passenger service, and had made several round trips across the Atlantic in that capacity. In the first week of May she was returning to Liverpool from New York, having on board nearly 2,000 persons all non-combatants, British and American. Included in her cargo was a small consignment of rifle ammunition and shrapnel shells weighing about 173 tons. Warnings that the vessel would be sunk, afterwards traced to the German Government, were circulated in New York before she sailed. On May 4 and 5 while she was approaching the British Isles, German U-boats were reported about the southern entrance to the Irish Channel and two merchant ships were sunk. Further reports of submarine activity in this area came in on the 6th. In consequence repeated and specific warnings and information were transmitted from the Admiralty wireless station at Valentia.

May 6, 12.5 a.m. To all British ships.

. . . Avoid headlands. Pass harbours at full speed. Steer mid-channel course. Submarines off Fastnet.

May 6, 7.50 p.m. To *Lusitania*.

Submarines active off south coast of Ireland.

May 7, 11.25 a.m. To all British ships.

Submarines active in southern part of Irish Channel. Last heard of south of Coningbeg Lighthouse. Make certain *Lusitania* gets this.

May 7, 12.40 p.m. To *Lusitania*.

Submarines five miles south of Cape Clear proceeding west when sighted at 10 a.m.

All these messages were duly received.

The Admiralty confidential Memorandum of April 16, 1915, contained the following passage:

War experience has shown that fast steamers can considerably reduce the chance of successful surprise submarine attack by zigzagging, that is to say, altering the course at short and irregular intervals, say in ten minutes to half an hour. This course is almost invariably adopted by warships when cruising in an area known to be infested with submarines. The underwater speed of a submarine is very low, and it is exceedingly difficult for her to get into position to deliver an attack unless she can preserve and predict the course of the ship attacked.

In spite of these warnings and instructions, for which the Admiralty Trade Division deserve credit, the *Lusitania* was proceeding along the usual trade route without zigzagging at little more than three-quarter speed when, at 2.10 p.m. on May 7, she was torpedoed eight miles off the Old Head of Kinsale by Commander Schweiger in the German submarine *U 20*. Two torpedoes were fired, the first striking her amidships with a tremendous explosion, and the second a few minutes later striking her aft. In twenty minutes she foundered by the head, carrying with her 1,195 persons, of whom 291 were women and 94 infants or small children. This crowning outrage of the U-boat war resounded through the world. The United States, whose citizens had perished in large numbers, was convulsed with indignation, and in all parts of the great Republic the signal for armed intervention was awaited by the strongest elements of the American people. It was not given, and the war continued in its destructive equipoise. But henceforward the friends of the Allies in the United States were armed with a weapon against which German influence was powerless, and before which after a lamentable interval cold-hearted policy was destined to succumb.

Even in the first moments of realising the tragedy and its horror, I understood the significance of the event. As the history of the Great War is pondered over, its stern lessons stand

forth from the tumult and confusion of the times. On two supreme occasions the German Imperial Government, quenching compunction, outfacing conscience, deliberately, with calculation, with sinister resolve, severed the underlying bonds which sustained the civilisation of the world and united even in their quarrels the human family. The invasion of Belgium and the umlimited U-boat war were both resorted to on expert dictation as the only means of victory. They proved the direct cause of ruin. They drew into the struggle against Germany mighty and intangible powers by which her strength was remorselessly borne down. Nothing could have deprived Germany of victory in the first year of war except the invasion of Belgium; nothing could have denied it to her in its last year except her unlimited submarine campaign. Not to the number of her enemies, nor to their resources or wisdom; not to the mistakes of her Admirals and Generals in open battle; not to the weakness of her allies; not assuredly to any fault in the valour or loyalty of her population or her armies; but only to these two grand crimes and blunders of history, were her undoing and our salvation due.

* * * * *

Meanwhile in the Flagship at the Dardanelles the most vehement discussion had been taking place.

Since March 18, two distinct currents of opinion had flowed in high naval circles. The forward school had been more than ever convinced that the quelling of the forts, the sweeping of the minefield, and ultimately the forcing of the Straits were practicable operations. They had no doubt whatever that the Fleet could make its way through into the Marmora. They had continually impressed upon the Admiral the duty of the Navy to attempt this task. Grieved beyond measure at the cruel losses that the Army had sustained, out of all proportion to anything expected, they felt it almost unendurable that the Navy should sit helpless and inactive after the orders they had

received and the undertakings made on their behalf. They therefore pressed their Chief to propose to the Admiralty the renewal of the naval attack.

All these pressures and the spectacle of the Army's torment produced their effect upon a man of the courage and quality of Admiral de Robeck. He finally resolved to send a telegram to the Admiralty expressing his willingness to renew the naval attack. The telegram bears the imprint of several hands and of opposite opinions. But apparently, as we now know, all present at these conferences in the *Queen Elizabeth* believed that the telegram would be followed by immediate orders for battle from the Admiralty. Admiral Guépratte, the French Commander, telegraphed to the Minister of Marine showing that he fully expected to be launched in decisive attack and asking for an additional and stronger ship to reinforce the French squadron. All the naval staff and commanders rested, therefore, under the impression of a great and sublime decision in pursuance of which they would readily face every risk and endure every loss.

Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Admiralty.

May 10, 1915.

The position in the Gallipoli Peninsula.

General Hamilton informs me that the Army is checked, its advance on Achi Baba can only be carried out by a few yards at a time, and a condition of affairs approximate to that in Northern France is threatened. The situation therefore arises, as indicated in my telegram 292:—

'If the Army is checked in its advance on Kilid Bahr, the question whether the Navy should not force the Narrows, leaving the forts intact, will depend entirely whether the Fleet could assist the Army in their advance to the Narrows best from below Chanak with communications intact or from above cut off from its base.'

The help which the Navy has been able to give the Army in its advance has not been as great as was anticipated, though effective in keeping down the fire of the enemy's batteries;

when it is a question of trenches and machine guns the Navy is of small assistance; it is these latter that have checked the Army.

From the vigour of the enemy's resistance it is improbable that the passage of the Fleet into the Marmora will be decisive and therefore it is equally probable that the Straits will be closed behind the Fleet. This will be of slight importance if the resistance of the enemy could be overcome in time to prevent the enforced withdrawal of the Fleet owing to lack of supplies.

The supporting of attack of Army, should the Fleet penetrate to the Sea of Marmora, will be entrusted to the cruisers and certain older battleships including some of the French, whose ships are not fitted for a serious bombardment of the Narrows, this support will obviously be much less than is now given by the whole of the Fleet.

The temper of the Turkish Army in the Peninsula indicates that the forcing of the Dardanelles and subsequent appearance of the Fleet off Constantinople will not, of itself, prove decisive.

The points for decision appear to be:—

First—Can the Navy by forcing the Dardanelles ensure the success of the operations?

Second—If the Navy were to suffer a reverse, which of necessity could only be a severe one, would the position of the Army be so critical as to jeopardise the whole of the operations?

This message deserved very attentive study. It was clearly intended to raise the direct issue of the renewal of the naval attempt to force the Straits. In it Admiral de Robeck balanced the pros and cons, on the whole with an emphasis on the latter. But at the same time he intimated unmistakably his readiness to make the attempt if the Admiralty gave the order. His telegram caused me much perturbation. I was of course, as always, in favour of renewing the naval attack. But the situation at this moment was very different from what it had been in March and April, and in pursuance of Admiral de

Robeck's decision of March 22 we were now following another line of policy. Three important events had taken place.

First, the Army had been landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula with a loss of nearly 20,000 men. That army was, it is true, arrested, but Lord Kitchener had told me that he intended to reinforce it with the whole Army Corps for which Sir Ian Hamilton had asked. The landing under fire had always been the feature in the operation most to be dreaded. It had been accomplished, and it seemed that since the Turks had not been able to prevent the landing, they would certainly fail to stop the further advance of the Army, if the ample reinforcements which were available were rapidly poured in. There were, therefore, at this moment reasonable prospects of carrying the military operation through to success if adequate military reinforcements were sent with promptitude.

Secondly, Italy was about to enter the war. The Anglo-Italian Naval Convention which we had just signed obliged us to send four battleships and four light cruisers to join the Italian Fleet in the Adriatic. I had undertaken this on the basis which had ruled ever since March 22 that Admiral de Robeck had definitely abandoned the naval attack and that we were committed to fight the issue out by military force. The withdrawal of these ships from Admiral de Robeck's fleet, although mitigated by French reinforcements, was incompatible with a decision to make a determined or even desperate effort to force the Dardanelles by ships alone.

Thirdly, what we had so long dreaded had at last come to pass. The German submarines had arrived in the Ægean. One or perhaps two, or even three, were reported on different occasions in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles. The position of the *Queen Elizabeth* became one of exceptional danger, and the security of the whole Fleet at the Dardanelles was affected to an extent which could not be readily measured. Moreover, if the Fleet succeeded in forcing the passage and arrived in the Marmora, it would be harassed in that sea by

German submarines. Though this fact was not conclusive, the action of the Fleet would be impeded and, on the assumption that the Straits closed up behind it, its effective strategic life would be to a certain extent curtailed.

Furthermore, the responsibilities of the Fleet now that the Army was landed and heavily engaged were very greatly increased. As Admiral Oliver pithily put it—'On March 18 the Fleet was single, now it has a wife on shore.'

All these considerations were present in my mind. Their cumulative effect was very great. Of course if Admiral de Robeck continued willing to make a decisive attack, it would be possible in a few weeks to recreate the conditions which would enable him to do so. Our naval resources were enormous and increasing almost daily. We could by the middle of June have raised his fleet to a greater strength than ever, and have perfected in every detail the preparations for the attempt. Moreover, by then we should have known where we stood with the German submarines in the Ægean and what that menace amounted to. For the moment, however, the arguments against decisive naval action were very weighty.

On the other hand, I was extremely anxious for a limited operation. I wished the Fleet to engage the forts at the Narrows and thus test the reports which we had received about the shortage of ammunition. Under cover of this engagement I wished the Kephez minefield to be swept and got out of the way. These were perfectly feasible operations now that the mine-sweeping force was thoroughly organised, and the Dardanelles fleet, although reduced, was ample for their purpose. The elimination of the Kephez minefield would in itself begin to imperil the communications of the army the Turks were building up on the Peninsula.

I could see, however, that Lord Fisher was under considerable strain. His seventy-four years lay heavy upon him. During my absence in Paris upon the negotiations for the Anglo-Italian Naval Convention, he had shown great nervous

exhaustion. He had evinced unconcealed distress and anxiety at being left alone in sole charge of the Admiralty. There is no doubt that the old Admiral was worried almost out of his wits by the immense pressure of the times and by the course events had taken. Admiral de Robeck's telegram distressed him extremely. He expected to be confronted with the demand he hated most and dreaded most, the renewal of the naval battle and fighting the matter out to a conclusion.

On the morning of the 11th we discussed the situation together. I endeavoured repeatedly to make it clear that all I wanted was the sweeping of the Kephez minefield under cover of a renewed engagement of the forts at the Narrows, and that I had no idea of pressing for a decisive effort to force the Straits and penetrate the Marmora. However, I failed to remove his anxieties. No doubt he felt that if the operation were successful, the case for the main thrust in a subsequent stage would be enormously strengthened; and no doubt this was true. The Kephez minefield was his as well as the Turks' first line of defence. After our conversation the following letters passed between us:—

May 11, 1915.

DEAR WINSTON,—

With much reluctance, in view of our conversation of this morning, I feel compelled to send you the enclosed formal memorandum of my views respecting the Dardanelles, as it is essential that on so vital a point I should not leave you in any doubt as to my opinion.

Yours, F.

I have had no communication with Sir A. Wilson or Sir H. Jackson on the subject whatever.

Secret.

May 11, 1915.

First Lord.

In view of the recent intelligence of the position of affairs at the Dardanelles, I desire formally to put on record my views as to the subsequent progress of the operations. This is neces-

sary because of the suggestion that you have made to me, that it may be expedient and a wise operation of war that the Fleet should again essay to attack or rush the Dardanelles Forts without assistance from the Army.

Our deliberations on the subject of these operations have been conducted either in personal conference or by the interchange of informal notes, and there is therefore no official record of the views that I have from time to time expressed. Although I have acquiesced in each stage of the operations up to the present, largely on account of considerations of political expediency and the political advantage which those whose business it is to judge of these matters have assured me would accrue from success, or even partial success, I have clearly expressed my opinion that I did not consider the original attempt to force the Dardanelles with the Fleet alone was a practicable operation.

I have always insisted that the North Sea is the proper theatre of operations of our Fleet, since there alone is it possible for the enemy to cause us irreparable disaster or for us to gain a decisive victory. For this reason I have looked with misgivings on the steady drain of our naval force to the Dardanelles during the last four months, whether the operations were to be conducted in conjunction with the Army or not. This collection of forces in the Mediterranean has been carried out so gradually that it has been difficult for me to decide at what point danger was threatened in the North Sea; yet each successive increment to the Fleet in the Mediterranean has appeared essential to the success of the local operations. Nevertheless, I was compelled finally to write to you some few weeks ago that I considered we had reached finality, and that no further depletion of our forces in Home Waters was permissible without grave risk in the principal theatre of the naval war.

Yesterday evening you sent me a draft telegram for my concurrence, giving a proposed reply to the telegram received from Vice-Admiral de Robeck earlier in the day. The general tone of this telegram implied that the Board of Admiralty might be prepared to sanction the Fleet undertaking further operations against the Forts irrespective of the Army being unable to advance beyond their present positions. I made an amendment, without which I was not able to concur in this telegram

being sent, inserting the words 'A naval attack cannot even be considered until the Italians, etc., etc.' I have not heard from you whether this telegram, or any, has actually been sent, I presume not, as I have seen no copy.[1] But it is clearly in my mind that you yourself would be prepared to sanction such a proceeding.

I therefore feel impelled to inform you definitely and formally of my conviction that such an attack by the Fleet on the Dardanelles Forts, in repetition of the operations which failed on March 18, or any attempt by the Fleet to rush by the Narrows, is doomed to failure, and, moreover, is fraught with possibilities of disaster utterly incommensurate to any advantage that could be obtained therefrom.

In my opinion we cannot afford to expose any more ships to the risk of loss in the Dardanelles, since the ships there, though not consisting in the main of first line units, are the reserve on which we depend entirely for supremacy in the event of any unforeseen disaster. Ships sent up to the Sea of Marmora before the Forts had been occupied by the Army would be exposed to great danger, in my opinion, both in getting there and after their arrival.

Before the naval attack of March 19, I expressed the opinion at the War Council that the whole operation, if pressed to a conclusion, would entail a loss of twelve battleships. Three battleships of the Allies were sunk on the 19th, and two others very seriously damaged, although they never came to really close quarters with the powerful batteries at the Narrows and never got close enough to attempt to cross a permanent minefield. If we now try to rush the Narrows, we shall first have to silence and completely control the fire of the very heavy batteries situated there, and then to force our way through minefields. The experience we have gained up to date does not encourage me to think that there is any reasonable prospect even of silencing the guns; the gunners will retire from them

[1] I cannot trace this draft. No doubt it was to the effect that while an attempt to rush the Straits could not immediately be authorised, operations should be undertaken to sweep the Kephez minefield under cover of the Fleet and force the forts to exhaust their ammunition. It seems probable that the words introduced by Lord Fisher destroyed the purpose and meaning of the telegram. It was not sent. Nothing was ever sent without his agreement.

until we are to such close quarters that they cannot miss, and then the guns will be fired at hulling range.

The sweeping of the mines in the Narrows is an operation which, in my opinion, experience has shown not to be possible, even after the batteries have been silenced, until the heights on either side have been occupied by the military.

Even after the Narrows are forced we have still to deal with the Nagara group of forts, and there will certainly be further minefields beyond the Narrows and in the Sea of Marmora. Consequently, in addition to the heavy ships, we must pass up a sufficient force of mine-sweepers, without which the large ships will be powerless and caught in a deadly trap.

Finally, even if the Fleet or a portion of it is rushed through to the Marmora, it will not be possible to keep it supplied with coal or munitions or to push an Army up to co-operate with it; and as you yourself so pertinently pointed out in the early discussions on this question, a Fleet by itself can effect very little at Constantinople. Moreover, it would again lose disastrously in returning through the Dardanelles, merely repeating Duckworth's fiasco. We are dealing this time with highly scientific and skilled and trained Germans, and we cannot gamble on any possibility of inefficiency on the part of the defence.

There is the further menace of German submarines daily drawing nearer to the Dardanelles, and certainly acquainted with the minefields and able to pass into the Marmora, where they would deal destruction to any of our ships.

For the above brief reasons I cannot, under any circumstances, be a party to any order to Admiral de Robeck to make an attempt to pass the Dardanelles until the shores have been effectively occupied. I consider that purely naval action, unsupported by the Army, would merely lead to heavy loss of ships and invaluable men, without any reasonable prospect of a success in any way proportionate to the losses or to the possible further consequences of those losses. I therefore wish it to be clearly understood that I dissociate myself from any such project.

FISHER.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.

May 11, 1915.

You will never receive from me any proposition to 'rush' the Dardanelles: and I agree with the views you express so

forcibly on this subject. It may be that the Admiral will have to engage the forts and sweep the Kephez minefield as an aid to the military operations; and we have always agreed in the desirability of forcing them [the enemy] to fire off their scanty stock of ammunition. But in view of Hamilton's latest telegram, this is clearly not required now. And it is my most earnest hope on public and still more on personal grounds that any real issue when presented will find us—as always hitherto—united. That shall be my only endeavour.

We are now in a very difficult position, whether it is my fault for trying, or my misfortune for not having the power to carry through, is immaterial. We are now committed to one of the greatest amphibious enterprises of history. You are absolutely committed. Comradeship, resource, firmness, patience, all in the highest degree will be needed to carry the matter through to victory. A great army hanging on by its eyelids to a rocky beach and confronted with the armed power of the Turkish Empire under German military guidance: the whole *surplus* fleet of Britain—every scrap that can be spared—bound to that army and its fortunes as long as the struggle may drag out: the apparition of the long-feared submarine—our many needs and obligations—the measureless advantages, probably decisive on the whole war, to be gained by success.

Surely here is a combination and a situation which require from us every conceivable exertion and contrivance which we can think of.

I beg you to lend your whole aid and good will; and ultimately then success is certain.

Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.

May 12, 1915.

Until the military operations have effectively occupied the shores of the Narrows, etc., no naval attack on the minefield can take place. But your letter does not repudiate this, and therefore, in view of our joint conversation with the Prime Minister prior to March 18, I have sent him a copy of my memorandum to you.

With reference to your remark that I am absolutely committed, I have only to say that you must know (as the Prime Minister also) that my unwilling acquiescence did not extend

to such a further gamble as any repetition of March 18 until the Army had done their part.

Thus it will be seen that never after March 22 were the Admiralty and the Naval Commander-in-Chief able to come to a simultaneous resolve to attack. On the 21st all were united. Thereafter, when one was hot the other was cold. On March 23 and 24 the Admiralty without issuing actual orders pressed strongly for the attack, and the Admiral on the spot said 'No.' On May 10 the Admiral on the spot was willing, but the Admiralty said 'No.' On August 18, under the impression of the disaster at Suvla Bay, the Admiralty raised the question again and authorised the Admiral to use his old battleships to the fullest extent, and the Admiral met them by a reasoned but decisive refusal. Lastly, in the advent of the final evacuation Admiral Wemyss, who had succeeded to the command, armed with plans drawn up in the most complete detail by Commodore Keyes for forcing the Straits, made vehement appeals for sanction to execute them: and this time the Admiralty refused.

* * * * *

The bad news which came in from Russia, from France and from the Dardanelles at this time, and the impression I had sustained while with the Army, led me to issue the following general minute to all Admiralty Departments:—

Secretary and Members of the Board.

May 11, 1915.

Please inform all heads of Departments in the Admiralty, that for the present it is to be assumed that the war will not end before December 31, 1916. All Admiralty arrangements and plans should be prepared on this basis, and any measures for the strengthening of our naval power, which will become effective before that date, may be considered. This applies to all questions of personnel, ships, armaments and stores, and to the organisation and maintenance of the Fleet and Dock-

yards, which must be adapted to a long period of continually developing strength without undue strain. I await proposals from all departments for the development and expansion of their activities.

W. S. C.

I also minuted Director of Transports.

May 11, 1915.

You have been told to make arrangements for carrying three infantry brigades of a division, plus 1,000 drafts, with their first line transports and horses to the Dardanelles, starting on the 17th instant at the latest, and employing for this purpose among other vessels the *Aquitania* and the *Mauretania*. The Artillery and all other details of the complete division are to go at the earliest moment, which will be when the first transports return from the Mediterranean.

In addition to this sufficient transports are to be brought home from the Mediterranean at once to take another complete Infantry division to the Dardanelles; these should be ready to sail not later than the 30th instant.

Submit at once your scheme for these movements, notifying the military authorities, and taking all necessary steps in anticipation of further sanction.

W. S. C.

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On the night of May 12 the *Goliath* was torpedoed and sunk in the Dardanelles by a Turkish destroyer manned by a German crew. This event determined Lord Fisher to bring the *Queen Elizabeth* home, and he made upon me a most strenuous counter-demand to that effect. I did not myself object to this. The first two 14-inch gun monitors (then named *Stonewall Jackson* and *Admiral Farragut*) were now ready; and I agreed with the First Sea Lord that the *Queen Elizabeth* should return, if they and other monitors, two battleships of the *Duncan* class, and certain additional vessels, were sent to replace her. He was very much relieved at this and was grateful. The position into which we had got was most painful. He wished at all costs to cut the loss and come away from

the hated scene. I was bound, not only by every conviction, but by every call of honour, to press the enterprise and sustain our struggling Army to the full.

I had now to break the news to Lord Kitchener. I invited him to come to a conference at the Admiralty on the evening of May 13. We sat round the octagonal table; Lord Kitchener on my left, Lord Fisher on my right, together with various other officers of high rank. As soon as Lord Kitchener realised that the Admiralty were going to withdraw the *Queen Elizabeth*, he became extremely angry. His habitual composure in trying ordeals left him. He protested vehemently against what he considered the desertion of the Army at its most critical moment. On the other side Lord Fisher flew into an even greater fury. 'The *Queen Elizabeth* would come home; she would come home at once; she would come home that night, or he would walk out of the Admiralty then and there.' Could we but have exchanged the positions of these two potentates at this juncture, have let Kitchener hold the Admiralty to its task, and sent Fisher to the War Office to slam in the reinforcements, both would have been happy and all would have been well. Such solutions were beyond us. I stood by my agreement with the First Sea Lord, and did my utmost to explain to Lord Kitchener that the Monitors would give equally good support with far less risk to naval strength. I recounted to him the vessels we were sending, and offered him the most solemn guarantees—in which I was supported by the Naval Staff—of our resolve to sustain the Army by the most effectual means. I thought he was to some extent reassured before he left.

The orders to the *Queen Elizabeth* went accordingly. I telegraphed to Admiral de Robeck to counteract any depressing effects from this temporary reduction of his forces, coming on top of the withdrawal of the four battleships for the Adriatic to meet the provisions of the Anglo-Italian Naval Convention. Anyhow, Italy was about to join us. A powerful fleet and a

regular army of nearly two million men were about to be hurled into the scale against the Teutonic Powers. Only patience and firmness were needed to carry everything through to success. It was plainly impossible, in view of the withdrawals of ships, to make an immediate renewal of the naval attack. I therefore agreed with Lord Fisher in the following series of telegrams.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

Two more infantry divisions with other reinforcements leave about 17th and 30th. Meanwhile arrival of German submarines in Turkish waters makes it undesirable to expose *Queen Elizabeth*. We are therefore sending you at once instead *Exmouth* and *Venerable*, and also, before the end of the month, the first two new monitors, *Admiral Farragut* and *Stonewall Jackson*, with 2 14-inch guns apiece, an effective range of 20,000 yards, firing a 1,400-pd. high-explosive shell, 10-feet draught, and special bulges against mine and torpedo.

You will be able to use the two monitors much more freely for all purposes, as they have been specially built for this work.

Queen Elizabeth is to sail for home at once with all despatch and utmost secrecy. You should make out she has gone to Malta for a few days and will return.

Secondly, an Anglo-Franco-Italian naval convention has been signed which requires us to provide four battleships for service with the Italian fleet as soon as the French squadron under your command is raised to a total of six battleships. *Queen*, *London*, *Implacable*, *Prince of Wales*, under Rear-Admiral Thursby, will, as soon as the French ships arrive, proceed to Malta in readiness for service with the Italian fleet in the Adriatic.

Thirdly, aforesaid convention also provides that four British light cruisers from your fleet are to go to Malta for service in the Adriatic as soon as the French cruisers under your command reach total of four. Independently of this, we are sending you *Cornwall* and *Chatham*. Names of French vessels and dates of arrival will be telegraphed to you later. It is probable they will arrive before June 1.

The utmost secrecy is to be observed in all these rearrange-

ments, and no one except General Hamilton and your Chief of Staff is to be informed until actual movements take place.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

May 12, 1915, 9.50 p.m.

329. Personal and Secret. From First Lord.

I hope you will not be discouraged by the recall of the *Queen Elizabeth* and the unavoidable changes in your fleet consequent on the Italian Convention.

The two monitors will go anywhere, and you will be able to use them with freedom.

They are the last word in bombarding vessels.

I am determined to support you and the army in every way to the end of your task, and I am quite sure that the result will amply repay the sacrifices and anxieties of the struggle.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

May 13, 1915, 8.40 p.m.

343. From First Lord. Secret and Personal. Your 490. We think the moment for an independent naval attempt to force the Narrows has passed, and will not arise again under present conditions. The army is now landed, large reinforcements are being sent, and there can be no doubt that with time and patience the Kilid Bahr plateau will be taken. Your rôle is therefore to support the army in its costly but sure advance, and to reserve your strength to deal with the situation which will arise later when the army has succeeded with your aid in its task. We are going to send you the first six monitors as they are delivered, and you will find them far better adapted to this special work than the old battleships. You will later receive telegrams about increased provision of nets against submarines, about fitting special anti-mine protection to some of your battleships, and about landing heavy guns.

On these telegrams—the last we ever sent together—Lord Fisher and I parted for the night.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT

The War Council of May 14—Lord Kitchener's Reproaches—My Reply—After the Council—The Necessary Measures—Minutes—A Conversation with Lord Fisher—The Italian Crisis—The Despatch of the British Cruisers—Lord Fisher's Point of View—Resignation of Lord Fisher—Correspondence—A New Combination—The Issue in the House of Commons—Mr. Lloyd George Intervenes—Mr. Asquith's Action—Sortie of the High Seas Fleet—Orders to the Grand Fleet—One Day—The Naval Situation at Dawn on May 18—Progress of the Political Crisis—Public Reaction—Sir Arthur Wilson's Letter—Correspondence with the Prime Minister—My Relations with the Prime Minister—Mr. Asquith and the House of Commons—The Formation of the First Coalition Government—A Visit of Ceremony—Sir Arthur Wilson's Persistent Refusal—The Interregnum—Carrying On—Telegrams and Letters—The U-Boat Menace in the Ægean—My Letter to Mr. Balfour—I Leave the Admiralty—The Naval Position—The Inheritance.

THE War Council of May 14 was sulphurous. We were in presence of the fact that Sir Ian Hamilton's army had been definitely brought to a standstill on the Gallipoli Peninsula, was suspended there in circumstances of peril, was difficult to reinforce, and still more difficult to withdraw. The Fleet had relapsed into passivity. Lord Fisher had insisted on the withdrawal of the *Queen Elizabeth;* German submarines were about to enter the Ægean, where our enormous concentrations of shipping necessary to support the Dardanelles operations lay in a very unprotected state. At the same time the failure of the British attacks in France on the Aubers Ridge was unmistakable. Sir John French's army had lost nearly 20,000 men without substantial results, and General Head-

quarters naturally demanded increased supplies of men and ammunition. The shell crisis had reached its explosion point —the shortage had been disclosed in *The Times* that morning —and behind it marched a political crisis of the first order. The weakness and failure of Russia were becoming every month more evident. Intense anxiety and extreme bad temper, all suppressed under formal demeanour characterised the discussion.

Lord Kitchener began in a strain of solemn and formidable complaint. He had been induced to participate in the Dardanelles operations on the assurances of the Navy that they would force the passage. Now they had abandoned the attempt. Most particularly had his judgment been affected by the unique qualities of the *Queen Elizabeth*. Now she was to be withdrawn: she was to be withdrawn at the very moment when he had committed his army to a great operation on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and when that army was struggling for its life with its back to the sea. Lord Fisher at this point interjected that he had been against the Dardanelles operations from the beginning, and that the Prime Minister and Lord Kitchener knew this fact well. This remarkable interruption was received in silence. The Secretary of State for War then proceeded to survey other theatres of the war in an extremely pessimistic mood. The army in France was firing away shells at a rate which no military administration had ever been asked to sustain. The orders which had been placed for ammunition of every kind were all being completed late. The growing weakness of Russia might at any time enable the Germans to transfer troops to the West and resume the offensive against us. Thirdly, he proceeded to dilate upon the dangers of invasion. How could he tell what would happen? Great Britain must be defended at all costs, all the more if other affairs miscarried. In these circumstances he could not send Sir John French the four new divisions he had promised him: they must be reserved for home defence.

When he had finished, the Council turned to me—almost on me. I thereupon spoke in the sense of the series of arguments with which the reader should now be familiar and which form the staple of this volume. If it had been known three months before that an army of from 80,000 to 100,000 men would be available in May for an attack on the Dardanelles, the attack by the Navy alone would never have been undertaken. Though matters had gone badly in many quarters and great disappointments had been experienced, there was no reason for despondency or alarm, still less to make things out worse than they were or to take unreasonable action. The naval operations at the Dardanelles did not depend and had never depended upon the *Queen Elizabeth*. They had been planned before it was known that she would go. She was now to be withdrawn because of the danger of submarines to so invaluable a ship. She would be replaced by monitors and other specially-designed vessels better suited in many respects to bombarding operations and largely immune from submarine attack. The naval support of the army would in no way be affected. It was no good exaggerating the value of the *Queen Elizabeth*, or supposing that a great operation of this kind could turn on a single vessel. As for the shell shortage, that would remedy itself if we made the greatest exertions and did not meanwhile embark on premature offensives without adequate superiority in men, guns or ammunition. Lastly, what was this talk about invasion? The Admiralty did not believe that any landing in force could be effected; still less, if effected, that it could be sustained and nourished. What grounds were there for supposing that the enemy, now fully committed to the eastward effort against Russia, would spin round and bring troops back to invade England or attack the Western front? And how many would they bring, and how long would it take? Stop these vain offensives on the Western front until the new armies were ready and sufficient ammunition was accumulated. Concentrate the available reinforce-

ments upon the Dardanelles and give them such ammunition as was necessary to reach a decision there at the earliest possible moment. Discard these alarms about the invasion of an island no longer denuded of troops as in 1914, but bristling with armed men and guarded by a fleet far stronger relatively than at the beginning of the war and possessed of sources of information never previously dreamed of. Let Sir John French have the new divisions for which he had asked, but otherwise remain on the defensive in France.

I am not quoting the actual words in either case, but their gist. The sense is fully sustained by the abbreviated records. These considerations appeared to produce a definite impression upon the Council. We separated without any decision. My arguments were, however, accepted almost in their entirety by the Coalition Administration which came into existence a few weeks later, and every one of the suppositions on which they rested was vindicated by events. The departure of the *Queen Elizabeth* did not prevent the naval support of the army at Gallipoli nor its supply by sea. The British and French offensives in France continued to fail over a much longer period than this account covers, with ever-increasing bloody slaughter and the fruitless destruction of our new armies. The Germans did not and could not arrest their drive against Russia, which was in fact on the eve of its full intensity. They did not come back to the West, nor was it physically possible for them to do so for many months to come. They did not invade England: they never thought of invading England at this period, nor could they have done it had they tried.

However, events were now to supervene in the British political sphere which were destined fatally to destroy the hopes of a successful issue at the Dardanelles and preclude all possibility of a speedy termination of the war.

After the Council I wrote the following letter to the Prime Minister which I think shows exactly where I stood:—

Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister.

May 14, 1915.

I must ask you to take note of Fisher's statement to-day that 'he was against the Dardanelles and had been all along,' or words to that effect. The First Sea Lord has agreed in writing to every executive telegram on which the operations have been conducted; and had they been immediately successful, the credit would have been his. But I make no complaint of that. I am attached to the old boy and it is a great pleasure to me to work with him. I think he reciprocates these feelings. My point is that a moment will probably arise in these operations when the Admiral and General on the spot will wish and require to run a risk with the Fleet for a great and decisive effort. If I agree with them, I shall sanction it, and I cannot undertake to be paralysed by the veto of a friend who whatever the result will certainly say, 'I was always against the Dardanelles.'

You will see that in a matter of this kind *someone* has to take the responsibility. I will do so—provided that my decision is the one that rules—and not otherwise.

It is also uncomfortable not to know what Kitchener will or won't do in the matter of reinforcements. We are absolutely in his hands, and I never saw him in a queerer mood—or more unreasonable. K. will punish the Admiralty by docking Hamilton of his divisions because we have withdrawn the *Queen Elizabeth;* and Fisher will have the *Queen Elizabeth* home if he is to stay.

Through all this with patience and determination we can make our way to one of the great events in the history of the world.

But I wish now to make it clear to you that a man who says, 'I disclaim responsibility for failure' cannot be the final arbiter of the measures which may be found to be vital to success.

This requires no answer and I am quite contented with the course of affairs.

I spent the afternoon completing my proposals for the naval reinforcement of the Dardanelles and for the convoying of the two divisions with which I understood and trusted Sir Ian

Hamilton was to be immediately reinforced. Here are the minutes and telegrams.

Minute by the First Lord.

Secretary. *May* 14, 1915.
First Sea Lord.
Chief of Staff.

Although there is good reason to hope that a speedy termination may be reached, it would now be prudent to assume that the operations against the Dardanelles will not take less than three months, and to make all preparations on that basis. If success is obtained earlier, so much the better; but let us make sure that it is not deferred longer. The operations have now reached a point where they may easily develop into a great siege similar to that of Port Arthur, though not so formidable. Our preparations should therefore consider and cover the following points:—

1. The provision of siege artillery, which could be used against the semi-permanent works, and the mounting on shore of heavy long-range naval guns which can, from the existing positions held by our troops, bring accurate fire to bear on the permanent defences.

2. The provision of landing stages of a semi-permanent character at Sedd-el-Bahr and Gaba Tepe,[1] with cranes, lines of railway, and all other facilities for handling large and heavy traffic.

3. Protection against the enemy's submarines by means of the establishment of regular lines of indicator nets watched by drifters, joining up Imbros with the Gallipoli Peninsula, and providing permanent protection along the western coast. In these tideless waters, and with the great quantity of indicator nets coming to hand, there should be no difficulty in this.

4. The battleships of the bombarding fleet should go by turns to Malta, and there be fitted with the best steel trellis-work protection against mines which can be devised. While the present lull in the operations continues there can be no need to keep the whole fleet at the Dardanelles, and every opportunity should be taken to afford the ships the necessary protection.

[1] Anzac Cove is meant. Still more important was the need of piers and cranes at Mudros.

5. Seventy aeroplanes and seaplanes will be required, and preparations must be made to work up to this. Some of the heaviest seaplanes capable of carrying and dropping 500-lb. bombs are to be included. I will settle the details of this last provision personally with the Director of the Air Division.

W. S. C.

Minute by the First Lord.

Secretary. *May* 14, 1915.
First Sea Lord.
Chief of Staff.

1. The fifth 15-inch howitzer, with fifty rounds of ammunition, should go to the Dardanelles with the least possible delay, being sent by special train across France and re-embarked at Marseilles. Let me have a time-table showing by what date it can arrive at the Dardanelles.

The two 9·2-inch guns will go to the Dardanelles, either in the two monitors prepared for them or separately, for mounting on shore. This will be decided as soon as we hear from Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

2. The following nine heavy monitors should go in succession to the Dardanelles, as soon as they are ready:—

Admiral Farragut, *General Grant*, *Stonewall Jackson*, *Robert E. Lee*, *Lord Clive*, *Prince Rupert*, *Sir John Moore*, *General Craufurd*, and *Marshal Ney*.

The first six of the 9·2-inch monitors should also go, unless the Admiral chooses to have two of their guns for work on shore, in which case the first four only will go. A time-table should be prepared showing the dates on which they can be despatched and will arrive. They can calibrate on the Turks. All necessary steps for their seaworthiness on the voyage should be taken.

In the case of the 9·2-inch monitors, it may be found better to send the actual guns out to Malta separately.

It is clear that when this large accession of force reaches the Vice-Admiral, he should be able to spare a portion of his battleships for service in Home waters; but it may be better to see how the monitors work and what use they are to him before raising this point.

3. Four of the *Edgars*, with special bulge protection against the mine and torpedo, are now ready. They carry twelve

6-inch guns each, and supply the medium armament which the monitors lack. They would be specially useful for supporting the army at night, without risk from torpedo attack. They would also be useful at a later stage in passing a small torpedo-tube [mounted on shore] or escorting other ships that were passing. We have not found any satisfactory employment for them here. It is not necessary to provide crews for them. Working parties, which can take them out, will be sufficient. The Admiral can man them from his large fleet for any special service that may be required. They should start as soon as possible.

Let me have a report on the manning possibilities as defined above, and times by which they can arrive.

It will be for consideration, when these vessels are on the spot, whether a valuable ship like the *Chatham* should not be released for other duties.

4. The Third Sea Lord will make proposals for providing anti-mine protection for a proportion of the battleships employed, on the lines proposed at our discussion.

W. S. C.

Although there could be very little doubt about what naval reinforcements were needed, I did not want the demands to fall upon Lord Fisher with a shock. I therefore went into his room in the evening to talk over the whole position with him. Our conversation was quite friendly. He did not object to any of the particular measures proposed, but as usual he did not like the steady and increasing drain on our resources and the inflection given to our campaign by the growing demands of the Dardanelles. I then said to him that it was really not fair for him to obstruct the necessary steps at the Dardanelles and then, if there was a failure, to turn round and say, 'I told you so, I was always against it.' He looked at me in an odd way and said, 'I think you are right—it isn't fair.' However, he accepted the minutes and we parted amicably.

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Into this extraordinary period, when intense situations succeeded each other with dazing rapidity, another event was

now to break. Following the method which I had adopted since Lord Fisher came to the Admiralty, I resumed work in my room at about ten o'clock that night. The Italian crisis was at its height. The Italian Government had resigned in consequence of the opposition to Italy entering the war, and this enormous and brilliant event which we had regarded as almost settled more than a fortnight before, now appeared once again to be thrown into the melting-pot. A little before midnight the Italian Naval Attaché, an officer ardently devoted to the cause of the Allies, asked to see me. He was accompanied by Admiral Oliver, who had a file of papers. The Naval Attaché said that the uncertainty and convulsions now prevailing in Rome made it vital that the arrangements for naval co-operation which had been conceived a week before in Paris should be brought into immediate effect. Under these arrangements we were to send *inter alia* four light cruisers to reinforce the Italian Fleet in the Adriatic. These cruisers were to reach Taranto by daybreak on the 18th. The Naval Attaché urged that their arrival should be accelerated. If they could arrive by the morning of the 16th, definite naval co-operation between Great Britain and Italy would be an accomplished fact, and this fact might well be decisive.

As I had myself negotiated the Naval Convention with Italy in Paris, I was of course fully acquainted with every detail. I had procured the First Sea Lord's agreement to all its terms, including the despatch of the four cruisers. These cruisers had been detailed. Fisher's green initial directing their movement was prominent on the second page of the file. No question of principle was involved by accelerating their departure by forty-eight hours. It did not come within the limits of the working arrangement which Fisher and I had made with each other, viz., to take no important step except in consultation. It never occurred to me for a moment that it could be so viewed, nor did the Chief of the Staff suggest that we should wake up the First Sea Lord. He would begin

his letters at about 4 o'clock in the morning and he would get the file then. I therefore approved the immediate despatch of these cruisers and wrote, as I had done in similar cases before, 'First Sea Lord to see after action.'

Although in later years when Lord Fisher and I were friends again, we never discussed this particular episode, the evidence which I have received from several quarters leaves me in no doubt that this was the spark that fired the train. The old Admiral, waking in the early morning, saw himself confronted again with the minutes proposing the reinforcements for the Dardanelles which he knew he could not resist. He saw himself becoming ever more deeply involved in an enterprise which he distrusted and disliked. He saw that enterprise quivering on the verge of failure. He saw a civilian Minister, to whom indeed he was attached by many bonds of friendship, becoming every day a hard and stern taskmaster in all that was needed to sustain the hated operation. He saw the furious discontents of the Conservative Party at the shell shortage and the general conduct of the war. He saw a Field-Marshal in uniform at the head of the War Office, while he, whose name was a watchword throughout the country, was relegated to a secondary place, and in that place was compelled by arguments and pressures he had never been able to resist, but had never ceased to resent, to become responsible for operations to which he had taken an intense dislike. And then on top of all this, a red ink minute about cruisers for Italy, 'First Sea Lord to see after action.'

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When I awoke the next morning, Saturday, I received no morning letter from the First Sea Lord. This was unusual, for he nearly always wrote me his waking thoughts on the situation. I had to go over to the Foreign Office at about nine o'clock and was kept there some time. As I was returning across the Horse Guards' Parade, Masterton-Smith hurried up to me with an anxious face—'Fisher has resigned, and I think

he means it this time.' He gave me the following note from the First Sea Lord:—

May 15, 1915.

First Lord.

After further anxious reflection I have come to the regretted conclusion I am unable to remain any longer as your colleague. It is undesirable in the public interests to go into details—Jowett said, 'never explain'—but I find it increasingly difficult to adjust myself to the increasing daily requirements of the Dardanelles to meet your views—as you truly said yesterday I am in the position of continually veto-ing your proposals.

This is not fair to you besides being extremely distasteful to me.

I am off to Scotland at once so as to avoid all questionings.

Yours truly,

FISHER.

I did not, however, at first take a serious view. I remembered a similar letter couched in terms of the utmost formality earlier in the year on the air raids, and he had threatened or hinted resignation both in letters and in conversation on all sorts of matters, big and small, during the last four or five months. I was pretty sure that a good friendly talk would put matters right. However, when I got back to the Admiralty I found that he had entirely disappeared. He was not in the building; he was not in his house. None of his people knew where he was except that he was going to Scotland at once. He had sent a communication to the other Sea Lords which they were engaged in discussing at a meeting of their own.

I went over to the Prime Minister and reported the facts. Mr. Asquith immediately sent his Secretary with a written order commanding Lord Fisher in the name of the King to return to his duty. It was some hours before the First Sea Lord was discovered. He refused point-blank to re-enter the Admiralty or to discharge any function. He reiterated his determination to proceed at once to Scotland. He was, however, at length persuaded to come and see the Prime Minister. I was not present at the interview. After it was over Mr.

Asquith told me that he thought he had shaken him in his intention, but that he was very much upset. He advised me to write to him, adding, 'If you can get him back, well and good; but if not it will be a very difficult situation.' The correspondence which follows tells its own tale.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.

May 15, 1915.

The only thing to think of now is what is best for the country and for the brave men who are fighting. Anything which does injury to those interests will be harshly judged by history, on whose stage we now are.

I do not understand what is the specific cause which has led you to resign. If I did I might cure it. When we parted last night I thought we were in agreement. The proposals I made to you by minute were, I thought, in general accord with your views; and in any case were for discussion between us. Our personal friendship is and I trust will remain unimpaired.

It is true the moment is anxious and our difficulties grave. But I am sure that with loyalty and courage we shall come through safely and successfully. You could not let it be said that you had thrown me over because things were for the time being going badly at the Dardanelles.

In every way I have tried to work in the closest sympathy with you. The men you wanted in the places you wanted them —the ships you designed—every proposal you have formally made for naval action, I have agreed to.

My own responsibilities are great, and also I am the one who gets the blame for anything that goes wrong. But I have scrupulously adhered to our original agreement that we should do nothing important without consulting each other. If you think this is not so, surely you should tell me in what respect.

In order to bring you back to the Admiralty I took my political life in my hands—as you know well. You then promised to stand by me and see me through. If you now go at this bad moment and thereby let loose upon me the spite and malice of those who are your enemies even more than they are mine, it will be a melancholy ending to our six months of successful war and administration. The discussions which will arise will strike a cruel blow at the fortunes of the army

now struggling on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and cannot fail to invest with an air of disaster a mighty enterprise which with patience can and will certainly be carried to success.

Many of the anxieties of the winter are past. The harbours are protected, the great flow of new construction is arriving. We are far stronger at home than we have ever been, and the great reinforcement is now at hand.

I hope you will come to see me to-morrow afternoon. I have a proposition to make to you, with the assent of the Prime Minister, which may remove some of the anxieties and difficulties which you feel about the measures necessary to support the army at the Dardanelles.

Though I shall stand to my post until relieved, it will be a very great grief to me to part from you; and our rupture will be profoundly injurious to every public interest.

Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.

May 16, 1915.

MY DEAR WINSTON,—

The Prime Minister put the case in a nutshell when he stated to me yesterday afternoon the actual fact that I had been dead against the Dardanelles operation from the beginning! How could it be otherwise when previously as First Sea Lord I had been responsible for the Defence Committee Memorandum stating the forcing of the Dardanelles to be impossible![1] You *must* remember my extreme reluctance in the Prime Minister's room in January to accept his decision in regard to the Dardanelles, and at the War Council held immediately afterwards I stated in reply to a question by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Prime Minister knew my views and I left the matter to him to explain.

[1] In December, 1906, the General Staff, after consultation with the Admiralty, had drawn up a memorandum on the question of attacking the Dardanelles. The conclusions of this memorandum were almost entirely negative. The two staffs deprecated unaided action by the Fleet. On the other hand, the General Staff cast great doubt on the feasibility of a joint enterprise. The Director of Naval Intelligence alone recorded an opinion that the General Staff underrated the value of co-operation by the Fleet in a joint enterprise, and thought that it was 'within the bounds of possibility that an operation of this nature might be forced upon us by arrogance or outrage on the part of the Ottoman Government, and that in such an event there is no reason to

Ever since (as I fear to your great annoyance) I have been, as you truly said the other day, in the unpleasant position of being antagonistic to your proposals, until the series of fresh naval arrangements for the Dardanelles you sent me yesterday morning convinced me that the time had arrived for me to take a final decision—there being much more in those proposals than had occurred to me the previous evening when you suggested some of them.

YOU ARE BENT ON FORCING THE DARDANELLES AND NOTHING WILL TURN YOU FROM IT—NOTHING. I know you so well! I could give you no better proof of my desire to stand by you than my having remained by you in this Dardanelles business up to this last moment against the strongest conviction of my life as stated in the Dardanelles Defence Committee Memorandum.

You will remain and I SHALL GO—It is better so. Your splendid stand on my behalf I can never forget when you took your political life in your hands, and I really have worked very hard for you in return—*my utmost*—but here is a question beyond all personal obligations. I assure you it is only painful having further conversations. I have told the Prime Minister I will not remain. I have absolutely decided to stick to that decision. Nothing will turn me from it. You say with much feeling that *it will be a very great grief to you to part from me*—I am certain you know in your heart no one has ever been more faithful to you than I have since I joined you last October. *I have worked my very hardest.*

Yours,

FISHER.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.

May 16, 1915.

I am touched by the kindness of your letter. Our friendship has been a long one. I remember how in 1908 you tried to

despair of success though at the expense, in all likelihood, of heavy losses.' The Committee of Imperial Defence, on February 28, 1907, came to the following conclusion: 'The Committee consider that the operation of landing an expeditionary force at or near the Gallipoli Peninsula would involve great risks and should not be undertaken if other means of bringing pressure to bear on Turkey were available.' The relevance of these opinions to the conditions prevailing eight years later in the Great War has been fully discussed in previous chapters. Taken literally they amounted to a confession of complete impotence.

bring me to the Admiralty as First Lord. When I eventually came in 1911 I proposed to the Prime Minister that you should return to your old position, and only the difficulties which your enemies were likely to make at that time prevented the accomplishment of my first wish. As it was I followed your guidance in the important decisions which have given us the 15-inch gun and Jellicoe to-day.

Six months ago in the crisis of this great war you came to my aid; since then we have worked together in the very closest intimacy. One difficulty after another has been surmounted; vast schemes of new construction have been carried through; and tremendous reinforcements are now approaching the fleet. Over the whole range of war policy and naval administration there is nothing that I know of on which we are disagreed—except the series of events which have led us into the 'Dardanelles.' Even there we are agreed upon the immediate steps, for I shall not press any wish about reinforcements beyond the point to which you were willing to go—namely, the six earliest monitors. We are now fully agreed that the fleet is not to attempt to rush the Narrows, but is to support the army in its gradual advance upon the forts by land. Orders in this sense have been given with which you were in complete accord.

It seems to me that the only course now is to hold on, to go slow, putting as many ships as possible in Malta and the Canal, out of harm's way, and using the destroyers which are out there to hunt the submarines and convoy the army corps which is now starting. If you came into the Admiralty to-morrow for the first time and looked at the problem as it now is, you would advise this as the only practical course.

You must feel as I do and as the War Council decided that whoever may be responsible for the original step, to withdraw now cannot be contemplated.

The announcement of your resignation at this juncture will be accepted everywhere as proof that the military operations as well as the naval at the Dardanelles have failed. The position of the army which has suffered a loss of 30,000 men in a joint operation will be jeopardised. The admission of failure at the Dardanelles, for so your resignation would be exploited all over the world, might prove the deciding factor in the case of Italy, now trembling on the brink. The knowledge of these

facts forces me, not for my own sake (for the fortunes of individuals do not matter now), to appeal to you not to make your resignation operative until at least Italy has declared herself, for which the latest date is the 26th. Meanwhile Sir Arthur Wilson could, if you desire it, do your work.

There ought to be no reproaches between us, and you, my friend, must at this moment in your long career so act that no one can say you were unmindful of the public interests and of the lives of the soldiers and sailors.

In any case, whatever you decide I claim in the name of friendship and in the name of duty, a personal interview—if only for the purpose of settling what explanation is to be offered to Parliament.

Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.

May 16, 1915.

DEAR WINSTON,—

As usual your letter is most persuasive, but I really have considered everything and I have definitely told the Prime Minister that I leave to-morrow (Monday).

Please don't wish to see me. I could say nothing as I am determined not to. *I know I am doing right.*

Yours,

FISHER.

It was no use persisting further, and I turned to consider new combinations. I was by no means sure that I should not be confronted with the resignation of the other three Sea Lords. On the Sunday morning, however, I learned that Sir Arthur Wilson had been consulted by the Sea Lords and that he had informed them that it was their duty to remain at their posts and that no case for resignation had arisen. I was led by this fact to ask Sir Arthur Wilson whether he would be willing himself to fill the vacancy of First Sea Lord. He asked for an hour to consider the matter, and then to my gratification, and I will add surprise, he informed me that he would do so. By Sunday at noon I was in a position to reconstitute the Board of Admiralty in all respects. I then motored down to the Prime Minister, who was in the country. I told him that Lord

Fisher's resignation was final, and that my office was at his disposal if he required to make a change. He said, 'No, I have thought of that. I do not wish it, but can you get a Board?' I then told him that all the other Members of the Board would remain, and that Sir Arthur Wilson would take Lord Fisher's place. I understood him to assent to this arrangement. Later his private secretary mentioned in conversation that the situation resulting from the shell shortage disclosure and the resignation of Lord Fisher was so serious that the Prime Minister thought the Unionist leaders would have to be consulted on the steps to be taken. I saw from this that the crisis would not be by any means confined to the Admiralty. Mr. Asquith asked me to stay and dine, and we had a pleasant evening amid all our troubles. I returned that night to London.

On Monday morning I asked Mr. Balfour to come to the Admiralty. I told him Lord Fisher had resigned, and that I understood from the Prime Minister that he would approve the reconstruction of the Board of Admiralty with Sir Arthur Wilson as First Sea Lord. I told him Sir Arthur Wilson was willing to accept office and that all the other Members of the Board would remain. I said that if these arrangements were finally approved by the Prime Minister that afternoon, I would make an immediate announcement to the House of Commons and court a debate. Mr. Balfour was indignant at Lord Fisher's resignation. He said that it would greatly disturb his Unionist friends and that he would himself go and prepare them for it and steady their opinion. Nothing could exceed the kindness and firmness of his attitude. I spent the rest of the morning preparing my statement for Parliament, expecting a severe challenge but also to be successful. I still had no knowledge whatever of the violent political convulsions which were proceeding around me and beneath me.

I went down to the House with the list of my new Board complete, fully prepared to encounter the debate. Before seeing the Prime Minister I looked into the Chancellor of the

Exchequer's room. Mr. Lloyd George then made to me the following disclosure. The leaders of the Opposition were in possession of all the facts about the shell shortage and had given notice that they intended to demand a debate. The resignation of Lord Fisher at this juncture created a political crisis. Mr. Lloyd George was convinced that this crisis could only be surmounted by the formation of a national Coalition Government. He had accordingly informed the Prime Minister that he would resign unless such a Government were formed at once. I said that he knew I had always been in favour of such a Government and had pressed it at every possible opportunity, but that I hoped now it might be deferred until my Board was reconstituted and in the saddle at the Admiralty. He said action must be immediate.

I then repaired, as had been arranged, to the Prime Minister. He received me with great consideration. I presented him with the list of the new Board. He said, 'No, this will not do. I have decided to form a national Government by a coalition with the Unionists, and a very much larger reconstruction will be required.' He told me that Lord Kitchener was to leave the War Office, and then added, after some complimentary remarks, 'What are we to do for you?' I saw at once that it was decided I should leave the Admiralty, and I replied that Mr. Balfour could succeed me there with the least break in continuity; that for several months I had made him a party to all our secrets and to everything that was going forward; and that his appointment would be far the best that could be made. The Prime Minister seemed deeply gratified at this suggestion, and I saw that he already had it in his mind. He reverted to the personal question. 'Would I take office in the new Government, or would I prefer a command in France?' At this moment the Chancellor of the Exchequer entered the room. The Prime Minister turned to him. Mr. Lloyd George replied, 'Why do you not send him to the Colonial Office? There is great work to be done there.' I did not accept this suggestion, and the discussion was about to continue when the

door again opened and a secretary entered with the following message for me: 'Masterton-Smith is on the telephone. Very important news of the kind that never fails has just come in. You must come back to the Admiralty at once.' I repeated this information to my two colleagues and quitted them without another word.

It took only five minutes to get to the Admiralty. There I learned that the whole German Fleet was coming out. All its three Battle Squadrons, both Scouting Groups and 70 destroyers were involved. A message from the German Commander-in-Chief to the Fleet contained the phrase 'Intend to attack by day.' The political crisis and my own fate in it passed almost completely out of my mind. In the absence of the First Sea Lord, I sent for Admiral Oliver, the Chief of the Staff and the Second Sea Lord, Sir Frederick Hamilton, and we together issued orders for the Grand Fleet and all other available forces to proceed to sea. I was determined that our whole power should be engaged if battle were joined, and that the enemy's retreat should be intercepted.

Admiralty to Commodore (T) and Captain (S).

May 17, 3.40 p.m.

Cancel previous arrangements. All light cruisers, destroyers and submarines prepare for sea at once and await orders.

Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief Home Fleets; 1st Battle Squadron, Invergordon; Battle Cruiser Fleet and 3d Battle Squadron, Rosyth.

3.55 p.m.

Grand Fleet is to prepare for sea at once.

Admiralty to Senior Naval Officer Submarines, Yarmouth.[1]

4.15 p.m.

Send all available submarines to Lat. 53° 35′ N., Long. 5° 0′ E., at once.

[1] These positions can be followed on the Map of the North Sea facing page 142.

A destroyer will be sent to communicate orders to them. Should no orders reach them within four hours of arrival at position ordered, they are to proceed to Lat. 53° 56′ N., Long. 6° 35′ E., and spread 3 miles apart East and West.

Admiralty to Admiral of Patrols.

4.30 p.m.

Recall all auxiliary patrols from Dogger Bank immediately.

Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief Home Fleets, Vice-Admiral 3d Battle Squadron, Vice-Admiral 1st Battle Squadron, and Vice-Admiral Battle Cruiser Fleet.

May 17, 1915, 5 p.m.

After explaining the situation and transmitting our information, this telegram proceeded:—

Grand Fleet including battle cruisers are to rendezvous at 4 a.m. to-morrow in Lat. 57° 14′ N., Long. 0° 18′ E. Light Cruiser Squadrons should proceed to Lat. 56° 40′ N., Long. 1° 0′ E. as soon as possible and look out.

Admiralty to all East Coast Patrol Centres.

5.35 p.m.

Recall auxiliary Patrol vessels to the vicinity of the War Signal Stations.

Admiralty to Rear-Admiral, Dover.

6.32 p.m.

Send five submarines to Harwich as soon as possible to follow the orders of Senior Naval Officer, Harwich. . . .

Admiralty to Rosyth, Nore, Dover and Admiral of Patrols.

6.45 p.m.

Have all submarines under way and ready for service outside their ports and in easy communication by visual signals at 3.30 a.m. to-morrow. All available destroyers and scouts are also to be in readiness.

To Admiral of Patrols only.

Illustrious is to be ready for action at anchor with steam up at 3.30 a.m. *Brilliant* and scouts are to be under way inside Spurn point at 3.30 a.m.

Admiralty to Rear-Admiral, Dover.

8.35 p.m.

Send the *Tribal* destroyers to join Commodore (T) and follow his orders. He will be patrolling on a line west from the mouth of the Texel at daylight to-morrow and they should join him as soon after daylight as possible. Warn destroyers that Commodore (T) has submarines with him.

Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief.

8.30 p.m.

Four submarines will be in Lat. 53° 35′ N., Long. 5° 0′ E., by noon to-morrow.

Commodore (T) with four light cruisers and about fifteen destroyers will be patrolling from the Texel to a position 40 miles west of Texel from daylight to-morrow supported by eleven submarines.

Coast defence destroyers and submarines will be under way and in visual communication with War Signal Station at daylight to-morrow.

First Lord to Commander-in-Chief.

8.10 p.m.

It is not impossible that to-morrow may be The Day. All good fortune attend you.

A detailed review of our available strength showed that the position at the moment was exceptionally good. Our margins were everywhere at their maximum. I requested Sir Arthur Wilson and the Second Sea Lord, Sir Frederick Hamilton, to sleep in the Admiralty at my house in order that we might be ready in concert to face the crisis which the dawn might bring. I did not return to the House of Commons but remained continuously in the Admiralty. Late that evening a red box came round from the Prime Minister enclosing a note stating that he had determined to form a Coalition Government and requesting all Ministers to place their resignations in his hands that same night. I complied with this request in the following letter:—

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Asquith.

May 17, 1915.

. . . So far as I am concerned, if you find it necessary to make a change here, I should be glad—assuming it was thought fitting—to be *offered* a position in the new Government. But I will not *take* any office except a military department, and if that is not convenient I hope I may be found employment in the field.

I am strongly in favour of a National Government, and no personal claims or interests should stand in its way at the present crisis. I should be sorry to leave the Admiralty, where I have borne the brunt, but should always rely on you to vindicate my work here.

Having despatched this, I went to bed. In the morning I had prepared for a Parliamentary ordeal of the most searching character; in the afternoon for a political crisis fatal to myself; in the evening for the supreme battle on the sea. For one day it was enough.

* * * * *

With the earliest daylight I went down to the War Room. From 3 a.m. onward our directional stations had begun to pick up the Enemy Fleet. The German Fleet Flagship was found to have been in Lat. 53° 50′ N., Long. 4° 20′ E. at 2.9 a.m. She was thus some 126 miles westward of Heligoland and about 40 miles from Terschelling Island. All the Fleets were at sea. The Grand Fleet with its attendant squadrons and flotillas was hastening to the southward. Commodore Tyrwhitt with the Harwich flotillas reinforced by the Dover destroyers and supported by eleven submarines, was off the Texel watching the narrow seas. It was only in southern waters that the enemy could strike an effective blow, such as attempting to block Calais or Boulogne. If this were their purpose the Harwich Force could either have attacked them by night, or drawn them into pursuit to the southward by day

over a line of submarines. If by any means the German Fleet could be delayed in southern waters, the opportunity would be afforded to the Grand Fleet of blocking their return to German ports, either off Terschelling or by the eastern route into the Heligoland Bight. The situation after dawn was therefore for some time of the highest interest.

We got no further indication of the enemy's movements till 7 a.m. It then appeared that he had altered course and was steering south-east instead of west. All our faces fell together. Unless he turned again towards us, we should not be able to scoop him into our net. The morning wore on amid confusing indications. At 9 o'clock we learned that the German light cruiser *Danzig* had met with an accident—presumably from a mine—in 54° 40′ N., 7° 5′ E. Gloom settled on the War Room. This was much nearer the German coast. At last at about half-past ten, it became certain that the German Fleet was on its way home. It had in fact—as far as we now know—been covering the laying of the minefields on the Dogger Bank which came into existence from this date. This operation being completed, the German Fleet re-entered the Heligoland Bight before our submarines could reach their intercepting position. The episode was over. All our fleets, squadrons and flotillas turned morosely away to resume their long-drawn, unrelenting watch, and I awoke again to the political crisis.

But my hour had passed, and during the afternoon, and still more the following day, I learned from a sure source that my position was being viewed with increasing disfavour by those into whose hands power had now fallen. I was not included in their conclaves, which proceeded with the utmost animation from hour to hour. The Unionist leaders on coming to the aid of the nation at this juncture made no conditions as to policy, but stipulated for half the places and patronage. Mr. Asquith had therefore to dispense with half his former colleagues. Those whose actions in the conduct of the war were

held to have produced this disagreeable result were naturally the object of resentment in Liberal circles. Up till Monday night it had been determined that Lord Kitchener should be transferred from the War Office to some great position similar to that of Commander-in-Chief; but on Tuesday it was realised that his hold on the confidence of the nation was still too great for any Government to do without him. On Wednesday Mr. Asquith issued the reassuring statement that both Lord Kitchener and Sir Edward Grey would remain in their respective posts.

On Friday the 21st, when Lord Northcliffe published an attack upon the War Minister of a vehement character, there was a spontaneous movement of public anger in many parts of the country, and the offending newspaper was burned upon the Stock Exchange. In the wake of these emotions it was natural that the vacant Garter should be bestowed upon Lord Kitchener, and he was at the same time awarded the Grand Cordon of the Belgian Order of Leopold. His rehabilitation was therefore complete. I alone was held to blame for all the upheaval and its discontents.

* * * * *

The more serious physical wounds are often surprisingly endurable at the moment they are received. There is an interval of uncertain length before sensation is renewed. The shock numbs but does not paralyse: the wound bleeds but does not smart. So it is also with the great reverses and losses of life. Before I had realised the intensity with which political irritation was being focussed on me, I had resigned myself to leaving the Admiralty. But on the Wednesday evening an incident occurred which profoundly affected my feelings and judgment. One of the Sea Lords informed me that Sir Arthur Wilson, who had already provisionally assumed the duties of First Sea Lord, had written to the Prime Minister declining to serve under any First Lord except me.

Sir Arthur Wilson to the Prime Minister.

May 19, 1915.

DEAR MR. ASQUITH,—

In view of the reports in the papers this morning as to the probable reconstruction of the Government, I think I ought to tell you that although I agreed to undertake the office of First Sea Lord under Mr. Churchill because it appeared to me to be the best means of maintaining continuity of policy under the unfortunate circumstances that have arisen, I am not prepared to undertake the duties under any new First Lord, as the strain under such circumstances would be far beyond my strength.

Believe me,
Yours truly,
A. K. WILSON.

This utterly unexpected mark of confidence from the old Admiral astounded me. His reserve had been impenetrable. I had no idea how he viewed me and my work. Certainly I never counted on the slightest support or approbation from him.

I was greatly disturbed and now found it very hard indeed to leave the Admiralty. In the midst of general condemnation, violent newspaper censures, angry Lobbies, reproachful colleagues, here at any rate was a judge—competent, instructed, impartial—who pronounced by action stronger than words not merely an acquittal but a vindication. I knew well the profound impression which Sir Arthur Wilson's action, had it been made public, would have produced upon the Naval Service. It would instantly have restored the confidence which press attacks, impossible to answer, had undermined. In no other way could the persistent accusations of rash, ignorant interference by the civilian Minister in the naval conduct of the war be decisively repelled. I felt myself strong enough with this endorsement to carry forward to eventual success the great operations to which we were committed. I felt that working with Wilson and Oliver, the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Staff linked together as they were, we should

again have re-established that unity, comradeship and authority at the summit of the Admiralty with which alone the risks could be run and the exertions made which were indispensable to victory. The information which had reached me was confidential and could not then be disclosed to the public by me. It was not disclosed by the Prime Minister.

In judging my relations with Mr. Asquith at this time, it must be remembered that every action of mine in opening and pressing the operations at the Dardanelles had been taken with his full knowledge, approval and support. There was no question of reluctant assent or inadvertent acquiescence obtained from a partially-informed chief by a scheming subordinate. In fact, as has been shown, the supreme decision which Lord Fisher resented so violently had been given personally by the Prime Minister and could only have been given by him; and apart from this Mr. Asquith was always and has always remained a convinced believer in the policy of the attack upon the Dardanelles. I do not write this in any spirit of personal reproach. I knew only too well at the time what were Mr. Asquith's own difficulties. He had up till then, during the many years of our association, treated me with the utmost kindness; and I knew well that if he had had the power, he would have ruled the event far differently. The emergencies of the time were too grave and the forces and pressures operating upon individuals too violent for ordinary conditions to apply. Therefore there never was and never has been the slightest personal recrimination upon the subject. My criticism is on general and public grounds.

I am confident that had the Prime Minister, instead of submitting to the demand of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to form a Coalition Government, laid the broad outlines of his case, both naval and military, before both Houses of Parliament in Secret Session, he and the policy he was committed to would have been supported by large majorities. The impressive recital of all that the War Office had achieved under Lord

Kitchener would greatly have mitigated the complaints on what had been neglected. I am sure I could have vindicated the Admiralty policy. Moreover on May 23, towering over domestic matters, came the Italian declaration of War against Austria. The Prime Minister's personal share in this event was a tremendous fact. I am certain that had he fought, he would have won; and had he won, he could then with dignity and with real authority have invited the Opposition to come not to his rescue but to his aid. On such a basis of confidence, comradeship and respect a true national coalition could have been formed to carry on the war, and Mr. Asquith would have been spared that interlude of distrustful colleagues, of divided or more often mutually paralysing counsels and of lost opportunities, which reached its end in December, 1916.

I wish here to record the opinion that Parliament is the foundation upon which Governments should rely, and that the House of Commons in particular has a right to be informed and consulted on all great occasions of political change. The only safe course is that men engaged as members of a Cabinet in an agreed and common policy should stand or fall by a vote of the House of Commons taken after full debate. Departure from these simple fundamental principles led to a disastrous breakdown, at a most critical moment, of the whole machinery for carrying on the war. It led to delay in taking urgent action, which delay, as will presently appear, was fatal in its consequences.

* * * * *

The formation of the new Government proceeded haltingly. Although by what was naïvely called a 'Self-Denying Ordinance' it was agreed between the party leaders that no Member of Parliament on either side who was serving at the front should be included in the Administration, the adjustment of party and personal claims raised at numerous points obstinate difficulties. Though I was left alone at the Admiralty, I was fully informed of every phase in this intricate and by no means

entirely edifying process. It is no part of my purpose to unfold these matters here: their chronicle may be safely left to the Grevilles and Crokers, of which posterity, and possibly even our own generation, are not likely to be destitute.

It was during this interval that I had the honour of receiving a visit of ceremony from Lord Kitchener. I was not at first aware of what it was about. We had differed strongly and on a broad front at the last meeting of the War Council. Moreover, no decision of any importance on naval and military affairs could be taken during the hiatus. We talked about the situation. After some general remarks he asked me whether it was settled that I should leave the Admiralty. I said it was. He asked what I was going to do. I said I had no idea; nothing was settled. He spoke very kindly about our work together. He evidently had no idea how narrowly he had escaped my fate. As he got up to go he turned and said, in the impressive and almost majestic manner which was natural to him, 'Well, there is one thing at any rate they cannot take from you. The Fleet was ready.' After that he was gone. During the months that we were still to serve together in the new Cabinet I was condemned often to differ from him, to oppose him and to criticise him. But I cannot forget the rugged kindness and warm-hearted courtesy which led him to pay me this visit.

By the 21st it was decided that Mr. Balfour was to come to the Admiralty. In accordance with what I knew were the Prime Minister's wishes, I endeavoured to persuade Sir Arthur Wilson to serve under him. He remained obdurate. No arguments would move him. He was at some pains to explain that his decision arose out of no personal consideration for me, but solely because he felt he could not undertake the burden without my aid. All the same, there seemed to be a quite unwonted element of friendliness in his demeanour, and this was proved a year later during the Parliamentary inquiry into the Dardanelles. Not only did he then give evidence

which was of the greatest possible assistance to me, but he drew up in a single night the cogent paper, already quoted in a previous chapter, on the technical gunnery aspects of the plan we had followed, and cast his ægis and authority over an enterprise which everybody was by then eager to condemn.

On the evening of the 21st I reported to the Prime Minister:—

I have tried very hard but without success to persuade Sir Arthur Wilson to hold himself at Mr. Balfour's disposition. In these circumstances I would advise Sir Henry Jackson.

This proposal was adopted, and meanwhile the process of Cabinet-making gradually completed itself. Mr. Asquith was good enough to offer me the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster. This office is a sinecure of much dignity. I should certainly not have felt able to accept it but for the fact that he coupled with it the promise that I should be a member of the War Council, or War Committee, of the Cabinet. I felt that thus situated I should be able to bring whatever knowledge I had acquired to the service of the Dardanelles expedition, and that it was my duty to aid and succour it by any effective means still left to me. I remained in the new Government so long as this condition was observed.

It was not till the 26th that the full list of the Government was announced and Ministers changed offices and kissed hands. The interval was full of anxiety. No councils were held on war matters and all questions of policy had necessarily to be reserved for the decision of the new Cabinet. No more troops were sent to the Dardanelles, and only day to day decisions could be taken. There was no First Sea Lord. In these circumstances I did the best I could.

First Lord to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

May 15, 1915.

What is the position of the smoke apparatus? Very good results have been achieved here and are being daily improved.

What plant have you got actually with you? Have you had time to see how it works? We have also developed here a white smoke apparatus made by chemical action, which is very dense and effective. This can be fitted in a few hours to destroyers and torpedo boats. Surely a device of this kind would be invaluable for blanketing off the enemy's searchlights if at any time the night sweeping of the minefield was resumed? Also both the black smoke made by burning oil from cones and the white smoke can be turned on and off at will. See that General Hamilton knows all about this. With the choice of positions enabling attack to be made from so many points of the compass, it might be possible to use the oil smoke apparatus on shore. The Government have also decided to use poisonous gas freely against the Germans. What do you and the General think about using this against the Turks? They will very likely use it against you.

Secondly, the Third Sea Lord is preparing designs of a simple form of mine protection which consists roughly of a light steel wire trellis-work fitted round the ship. Ships could go by turns to Malta to be fitted with this in dry dock. I cannot understand why we have not done this before in the case of ships not required for general seagoing purposes but for a special operation in landlocked waters.

Thirdly, you have not yet answered about the two 9-inch guns for landing on shore. Although we hope progress will be swift, every preparation must now be made on a three-months' basis, so that whatever happens we see finality in our task. Nine-inch guns mounted even in our existing positions would enable accurate fire to be brought on many of the forts. A 12-inch gun on a railway mounting will be ready in July, and all preparations will be made to send it to you if the result is not achieved sooner.

Fourthly, what is being done about establishing strong semi-permanent landing stages with cranes, railway lines, etc? This ought surely to be undertaken without delay, good contractors being employed. I am not sure how far this is our business or the army's; but if you let me know how the position stands, I can easily arrange harmonious action from here.

Fifthly, fifty miles more indicator net, a portion of which is 120 ft. deep, is being despatched at once, together with addi-

tional drifters to lay and watch it. It should be possible for you to make a large zareba from Gaba Tepe, through Imbros, to Kum Kale or thereabouts, within which your ships can act with comparative safety.

Sixthly, I am making arrangements to have a very strong reinforcement of aircraft sent out, including machines which will carry 500 lb. bombs, more than equivalent to a 15-inch high explosive shell. Have you considered the propriety and expediency of an air raid upon Constantinople? The shipping in the harbour, the German Embassy, the Government buildings, the arsenal, etc., would be fair objects of attack, and the moral effect on the population would be serious. We cannot possibly spare you any more destroyers, but the question of more submarines is being considered.

Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

May 16, 1915.

We doubt as many as three German submarines being in the Mediterranean. One is more probable, but there may be two. The others may be Austrians. But it seems essential to review the situation. The leading brigades of the new army corps should arrive towards the end of the month, and the whole force be completed about a fortnight later. In this interval it should not be necessary to keep the whole fleet in an exposed position. If you can spare them from aiding the military operations, some of your ships might go to the Canal or to Malta, where they would be in safety pending a general attack. Eight or ten of your destroyers must be used as escorts to the transports from Gibraltar onward if you can spare them. We cannot spare any. The policy is to get through this interval with the minimum of loss while helping the gradual advance of the army. Please telegraph your views, and also what ships you will be able to keep behind the net at Mudros or in other safe places. The safe convoying of the troops is now a vital matter.

A few personal messages may perhaps be included here. I telegraphed to my brother, who held a position on Sir Ian Hamilton's Staff, as follows:—

Mr. Churchill to Major John Churchill.

May 18, 1915.

Fisher has chosen to resign at this awkward moment largely on Dardanelles question, and very large changes involving my leaving the Admiralty are in progress. But I am quite sure that your two friends[1] will be well supported, that the enterprise will be carried through and that the results will pay for all. I shall be in a position to help indirectly.

Sir John French to Mr. Churchill.

May 20, 1915.

I hear you are worried and troubled which grieves me very much. I do not think a word of sympathy is ever out of place, and I only send this one word to assure you that I am always with you in deep affection and admiration. You know you are always welcome here.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Haldane.

May 21, 1915.

I reproach myself with not having been to see you. I trust the vile Press Campaign, of which you have been made the object, will not prevail against the loyalty of your lifelong friends. I am so short of credit at the moment that I can only make an encouraging signal, but you must take the will for the deed.

Mr. Churchill to Major John Churchill.

May 23, 1915.

I have accepted the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with a seat in the Cabinet, and on the War Council; this will enable me to watch over the Dardanelles. Mr. Balfour follows me here to my great relief, and Fisher does not return. Although I am down, the policy goes on, and will be well supported.

Mr. Churchill to Major John Churchill.

May 26, 1915.

I hope our friend [Sir Ian Hamilton] will ask for all the troops he needs. K. is very friendly to the Dardanelles and

[1] The General and the Admiral.

means to make it go through; but I am afraid of troops coming in so slowly that you will have to fight the whole Turkish Army in relays. Therefore, I strongly urge that all that is wanted should be asked for boldly. The new Cabinet will be partial to broad decisions, and now is the time.

Sir John French to Mr. Churchill.

May 29, 1915.

I grieve very much on account of all the worries that beset you. You have always spoken to me of the rest and happiness it gives you to be with the Army in the Field. Can you manage to come over again when the P.M. leaves, and try to detach yourself for the moment from these troubles and annoyances? A view of the troops and the enemy will change your perspective. . . . Dark days come to all of us in turn and it is then we want to turn for help and sympathy to affectionate friends—and you have many here.

Early on the morning of the 26th—my last at the Admiralty—arrived the sinister news that the *Triumph* had been torpedoed and sunk at the Dardanelles by a German submarine. However, my task was over, and before setting out for Buckingham Palace I wrote the following letter to the statesman on whom the burden of Admiralty affairs was now placed:—

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Balfour.

May 26, 1915.

I leave you one task of great difficulty which requires your immediate attention, viz., the protection of the Dardanelles fleet against submarine attack. Do not underrate the gravity of this danger. Unless it can be coped with, there are no limits to the evil consequences. For nearly a fortnight I have not had the authority to make important decisions. Your fresh mind and calm judgment will give the impulse which is necessary. I set out the following notes for what they are worth:—

1. The military operations should proceed with all possible speed, so that the period of danger may be shortened. Whatever force is necessary, can be spared and can be used, should be sent at once, and all at once.

2. Until decisive operations on land can be resumed, the Fleet must remain in the safety of Mudros harbour—or the Suez Canal. Such ships as are required to cover the troops should, until the netted lighters arrive, be protected by colliers and empty transports lashed alongside.

3. As soon as possible ships must be provided which are immune from torpedo attack. As specified in my minute of the 13th instant to the First Sea Lord, the nine heavy monitors should go out as soon as each is ready; and the four *Edgars* which have been fitted with bulges, and which supply the medium battery for bombarding purposes, should be sent at once. Nearly a fortnight has been lost in regard to the *Edgars* by the interregnum here. Until these vessels arrive, and while no decisive land operations are in progress, the exposure of ships should be kept to the absolute minimum.

4. At least 100 trawlers and drifters, with 100 miles of indicator net, and eight more destroyers (which should on the way out escort transports) should be sent; in addition to all the other measures which have been taken, and of which you will be told.

5. The protection against submarines must take the form of developing a great netted area around the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, occupied by large numbers of armed trawlers and seaplanes always ready. I want to emphasise the fact that action must be drastic and on a large scale. Much has been done already.

6. The measures to watch and net the mouth of the Adriatic, and to search for submarine bases in Asia Minor, to mine-in likely bases, to develop a system of intelligence regardless of expense, all of which are now in progress, must be pressed forward.

7. Punishment must be doggedly borne.

From the bottom of my heart I wish you success in this and all other anxious business which has been thrust upon you, and which you have so loyally and courageously undertaken.

* * * * *

Thus ended my administration of the Admiralty. For thirty-four months of preparation and ten months of war I had borne the prime responsibility and had wielded the main

executive power. The reader who has persevered thus far in this account will realise the difficulties that were coped with, the hazards that were encountered, the mistakes that were made, and the work that was done. Dubious years, many misfortunes, enormous toils, bitter disappointments, still lay before the Royal Navy. But I am entitled at this point in the story to place on record the situation and condition in which the mighty instrument of our sea power and of our salvation passed into the hands of my successors. At no moment during all the wars of Britain had our command of the seas been more complete, and in no previous war had that command been asserted more rapidly or with so little loss. Not only had the surface ships of the enemy been extirpated from the oceans of the world; not only in the North Sea had his fleets and squadrons been beaten, cowed and driven into port; but even the new and barbarous submarine warfare had been curbed and checked. For more than a year to come the German High Seas Fleet scarcely quitted its harbours, and even when they did so, it was with no intention of fighting a battle and in the unfounded hope that they could return unperceived or unmolested. For eighteen months their submarine campaign was virtually suspended. In spite of modern complications which have been explained, the economic blockade of Germany was established and maintained, so far as it rested with the Navy, with the utmost strictness: scarcely any ship that the Navy had authority to touch ever passed our far-spread cordons. The maintenance of the armies in France and in the East proceeded every month on a vaster scale, without the slightest substantial hindrance upon their communications becoming apparent to our commanders at the front. The mercantile fleets of Britain and of her allies moved with freedom in all directions about the seas and oceans: and an insurance rate of 1 per cent left a substantial profit to the Government Fund. These conditions lasted during all the year 1915 and up to the last quarter of the year 1916. There

never was in all the history of war such an unchallenged reign of sea power.

Meanwhile the British Navy was growing continually and rapidly in strength. The fruits of the exertions which had been made before and since the outbreak of the war were being reaped with each successive month. Battleships, battle cruisers, light cruisers in dozens, submarines in scores, destroyers in hundreds, small craft in thousands, were being armed and built, and were coming into commission in an unceasing and broadening tide. The manning arrangements to meet this enormous new construction were perfected for a year in advance. Every requirement known to the naval science of the day in guns, in torpedoes, in shells, in explosives, in propellant, in coal, in oil, and in auxiliary services had been foreseen and provided for in harmonious relation to the expansion of our naval power. At the Admiralty we were in hot pursuit of most of the great key inventions and ideas of the war; and this long in advance of every other nation, friend or foe. Tanks, smoke, torpedo-seaplanes, directional wireless, cryptography, mine fenders, monitors, torpedo-proof ships, paravanes—all were being actively driven forward or developed. Poison gas alone we had put aside—but not, as has been shown, from want of comprehension. Even for the new submarine campaign, not to burst upon us for nearly eighteen months, the principal safeguarding measures had already been devised: the multitudes of vessels were building; the decoy ships were at work.

Moreover the true war leaders of the Navy had already emerged from the ranks of peace-time merit; and in Beatty, Keyes, Tyrwhitt, Pakenham, and I must add Lewis Bayly—though under a temporary cloud—we had masters of the storm capable of rivalling upon the seas and against the enemy's coasts the exploits of the famous sailor figures of the past. There remained only to devise and perfect those schemes of naval offensive which in spite, and indeed by means of, modern science and invention would have liberated the pent-

up skill and daring of our officers and men. There was also at hand that prolonged interlude of ease and tranquillity upon salt water in which every plan could be worked out with sure and deliberate study.

From all this reward and opportunity Fisher, by his own impulsive, fatal act, and I, through causes which these pages expose, were for ever disinherited. We lingered on, helpless spectators, until the period of halcyon weather came fearfully to an end and the very life of the State was plunged again into supreme hazard on the seas.

CHAPTER XIX

THE EFFORT OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

The New Government—A Defective War Instrument—My Account of the Naval Situation at Home—The General Situation—The Eastern Theatre—The Western Theatre—The North Sea and Home Defence—The Question of Invasion—The Dardanelles—The First Meeting of the New War Committee—Lord Kitchener's Pronouncement—A Belated Decision—Duality of Opinion—Consequences of Delay—The Bulair Isthmus Question—Telegrams—A Starving or a Storming Operation—Efforts to Procure Further Reinforcements—Mr. Balfour's Exertions—A Further Note Upon the General Military Situation—The Main Facts—Russia—Disappointments of the French Offensive—Grave Losses of the French Army—No Progress in Mechanical Warfare—Lack of Concert Between the Allies—Man-Power—The Dominant Needs—The Only Prize Within Reach.

THE new Administration met for the first time on May 26. From the very outset its defects as a war-making instrument were evident. The old Ministers had made an accommodation with their political opponents not on the merits but under duress. The new Ministers were deeply prejudiced against the work which their predecessors had done. Had they been responsible they would no doubt have made a somewhat different series of mistakes. The Unionists had little confidence in the Prime Minister. Indeed, one of the questions they had most anxiously debated was whether they could assent to his remaining at the head of the Government. Mr. Lloyd George, the powerful politician whose action had compelled the formation of the Coalition, found himself on the morrow of his success in a position of singular weakness. He had ceded the Exchequer to Mr. McKenna, and found in the new Cabinet, so largely his creation, an array of Conservative notables who regarded his political record with the utmost

aversion. Mr. Bonar Law, the Leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, might well have expected this dominant post, and although he was not himself affected by personal considerations, much soreness remained among his friends. Whereas practically all the important matters connected with the war had been dealt with in the late Government by four or five Ministers, at least a dozen powerful, capable, distinguished personalities who were in a position to assert themselves had now to be consulted.

The progress of business therefore became cumbrous and laborious in the last degree, and though all these evils were corrected by earnest patriotism and loyalty, the general result was bound to be disappointing. Those who had knowledge had pasts to defend; those free from war commitments were also free from war experience. At least five or six different opinions prevailed on every great topic, and every operative decision was obtained only by prolonged, discursive and exhausting discussions. Far more often we laboured through long delays to unsatisfactory compromises. Meanwhile the destroying war strode remorselessly on its course.

Although without executive power, I was treated with much consideration by the new Cabinet. I continued to sit in my old place on Lord Kitchener's left hand. I was nominated to serve on the committee of nine Ministers which, under the title of the Dardanelles Committee, was virtually the old War Council. I was invited to prepare statements on the situation, both naval and general, and every facility was placed at my disposal by the Admiralty for marshalling and checking the facts. Lord Kitchener was also desired to present to the new Cabinet similar statements from the War Office standpoint. These papers were prepared with the utmost despatch. Meanwhile the education of the new Ministers in the inside and central point of view and their initiation in the secret and special information at the disposal of the Government continued. On June 1 I circulated my two documents.

The first, dealing with the condition of the Navy is printed as an Appendix.[1] The second deserves attention here.

A Note on the General Situation,

June 1, 1915.

On leaving the Admiralty after 10 months' war, during which I have followed attentively the whole course of the operations by land and sea, I think it right to put on record my view of the general situation.

I.—*Eastern Theatre.*

My appreciation remains the same as in the memorandum I gave the Prime Minister on February 25.[2] The Russian front may vary in position, but it will always remain an immense line of battle effectively containing very large German forces. The most serious factor in the Russian case is that for several months the monthly wastage of rifles exceeds the supply, and that therefore the Russian infantry in the field must diminish. On the other hand, a comparatively slight retirement of the Russian line relieves so greatly the pressure upon her, and increases so greatly the difficulties of the German offensive, that there is no reason to fear that the processes by which Russia will revive and develop her military strength will be ruptured, or that she will not continue meanwhile to hold on her front great numbers of the enemy.

The entry of Italy (and almost certainly Roumania) into the war should more than repair in the Eastern theatre any deficiency in the Russian forces. Whatever the result of the collision of the Italian and Austrian armies, the subtraction of Austrian and probably German troops from the Russian front must be considerable. The possibilities of an Austro-German advance through Serbia towards Bulgaria—which I have always dreaded—certainly seem less menacing than three months ago. Taking a general view of the Eastern theatre, I do not think we have to apprehend in the next three months any general Russian collapse or any state of affairs which will allow Germany to transfer to the West so much as 500,000 men.

[1] Appendix II. I trust it may be read.

[2] See page 185.

II.—*Western Theatre.*

I do not need to alter in any way my view on this subject, expressed in the aforesaid memorandum. The Germans have not yet the power, nor will they have it at any time during the next three months, to break up the British and French lines in the West. On the other hand, I feel more than ever doubtful of our ability to break the German lines.

Although attacks prepared by immense concentrations of artillery have been locally successful in causing alterations of the line, the effort required is so great and the advance so small that the attack and advance, however organised and nourished, are exhausted before penetration deep enough and wide enough to produce a strategic effect has been made. The enemy must always have some knowledge of the concentration before the attack. They will always have time to rectify their line afterwards. At an utterly disproportionate cost the line will be merely bent; and bendings of the line at particular points do not appear to compromise other parts. I expect we have lost more than 50,000 men since the beginning of April —two-thirds in attempts at the offensive—without appreciable results, in spite of the resolution and skill with which Sir John French has directed the operations.

I remain generally of the opinion I wrote to the Prime Minister on December 29, as follows:—

> 'I think it quite possible that neither side will have the strength to penetrate the other's lines in the Western theatre. Belgium particularly, which it is vital for Germany to hold as a peace-counter, has no doubt been made into a mere succession of fortified lines. I think it probable that the Germans hold back several large mobile reserves of their best troops. Without attempting to take a final view, my impression is that the position of both armies is not likely to undergo any decisive change.'

We should be ill-advised to squander our new armies in frantic and sterile efforts to pierce the German lines. To do so is to play the German game. As long as the process of attrition works evenly on both sides we are on the road to victory. But a few weeks of an attempted offensive may inflict irreparable injury upon our newly-gathered military power.

The best that could happen for us would be a renewed German offensive in the West. There is little real prospect of this on the greatest scale. Even if 1,000,000 men could be brought from the Russian front—which is impossible—the British and French Armies should be able to hold their own and inflict decisive losses on the enemy. Time is on our side, if we do not squander our resources. The policy hitherto pursued by General Joffre with so much obstinacy appears not only to be the right one, but the only one; and his reasons apply to the British army even more than to the French.

Unless we are to continue the offensive by frontal attacks on fortified lines, the immediate deficiency in high explosive shell is not so serious as has been made out. For the defensive, as well as for manœuvring, shrapnel is the better, and it is the defensive that alone is vital to us. The deficiency in high explosive shell should be remedied as soon as possible, but meanwhile we ought certainly not to throw away our armies in making attacks without it. From this as from other reasons I deprecate strongly an impatient renewal of a British offensive on a great scale.

The one important military object which we should secure at this moment in the West is the taking over of the whole seaward flank of the line. I have always since November urged this. The interposition of a French detached army between the British left and the Belgians is a great and unnecessary source of weakness, and has already led to a bloody disaster. Our present military resources enable us to relieve the French in this sector, and every consideration of strategic prudence enjoins it.

It is a fair general conclusion that the deadlock in the West will continue for some time, and that the side which risks most to pierce the lines of the other will put itself at a disadvantage.

There is no reason to be disheartened about such a situation. Its general tendency is favourable to our ultimate success. We must of course give up hope of finishing the war this year; and all our plans ought to be based upon its continuance for another 18 months. The relative strength of the antagonists in the spring of 1916, both by land and sea, should be satisfactory to us; and before that time other means of wearing down Germany, and other fields of attack will present themselves. On this I will dwell later.

III.—*The North Sea and Home Defence.*[1]

I have dealt separately with the naval position in the decisive theatre of the North Sea, and with the general state of our naval resources, present and prospective. The conclusion which may be drawn therefrom is that the superiority in strength and numbers of our Grand Fleet over the German High Sea Fleet is substantially greater than at the outbreak of war; and that this superiority will progressively improve during the next six months. I hope that the First Lord of the Admiralty, who has recently had the advantage of examining the whole situation with Sir John Jellicoe, may be able to confirm this with the authority of the new Board of Admiralty. If so, there need be no anxiety about the supreme and vital matter, namely, the result of a general battle at sea.

But the question of an invasion of England by a German army must be dealt with separately. The British Grand Fleet is concentrated in the North at Scapa Flow and the Firth of Forth; the Channel Fleet, which in the early months of the war was at Portland, is now at the Dardanelles; and the immediate naval defence of the eastern coasts of England, from the Tyne to Dover, is maintained by about 60 submarines, 150 destroyers and torpedo-boats, and 10 light cruisers or scouts. There are also extensive barriers formed by German and British minefields.

The Admiralty have always held the view that this is sufficient; and on May 13, at the War Council, I gave, with the agreement of Lord Fisher and Sir Arthur Wilson, the fullest possible assurances on the point. The reasoning on which the Admiralty opinion is based is familiar to all who have followed the last five years' discussions on the Committee of Imperial Defence. But the Admiralty now speaks with the knowledge and experience of 10 months of war, and of the methods of the enemy; and, while I was responsible, every high officer who knew the whole facts was convinced that the operation of landing a German invading army of 70,000 men or upward in the present circumstances was one which the Germans would not attempt, and which, if they attempted,

[1] This passage was intended to allay Lord Kitchener's persistent anxieties about Invasion, which complicated all military arguments at this period.

was doomed to certain disaster. It is not a question only of evading the Fleet, but of launching 70,000 men or upward on the following enterprise, viz., to cross 250 miles of sea in the face of a decisively superior hostile navy; to disembark the army on an open beach (for all the ports are mined or otherwise defended), with all the chances of weather and the certainty of attack at the latest within a few hours by submarines and destroyers; to land in the face of opposition, for all the coast defence is thoroughly organised; to accomplish this task and land all the necessary artillery—field and heavy—on which German above all other armies rely, with all the stores, appliances, transport, and ammunition, without which a modern army cannot fight or live, within a period at the longest of 20 to 24 hours, after which they must with certainty be attacked from the sea by a decisively superior force, their escort defeated, their transports destroyed, and their communications irremediably severed; and then with what has been landed, and only that, to enter upon the conquest of Great Britain. That is the proposition, for the sake of which Germany is incidentally to risk the decisive battle with her Fleet.

It was, and I believe is, the universal conviction at the Admiralty that no sane Government will entertain it for a moment. That opinion would have been agreed to absolutely by every military authority who spoke for the War Office up to the outbreak of the war. It should be remembered that the body of doctrine assembled on this subject before the war was the result of prolonged and detailed discussions extending over many years and ending in a complete agreement among all—soldiers, sailors, and politicians—who took part in them. All that has happened during the war has justified and confirmed our conclusions, on which the Admiralty and War Office have, in fact, regularly and boldly acted.

The question of whether we are in danger of an invasion or raid need not be settled by reference alone to the naval forces available. The military forces in this country are now very considerable and are rapidly increasing. It cannot be argued that Germany will be able to dispose of Russia and Italy during the next six weeks, for instance, and also in the same time transfer large armies in the Eastern theatre to attack our lines in the West, and thirdly provide an Expeditionary Army for

the invasion of England. Before a decision can be taken by the Cabinet on the main question of war policy now outstanding, it seems desirable that we should know what forces will be ready in this country at particular dates during the next three months. It is all a question of numbers in relation to dates; and it should not be difficult for this information to be supplied.

The Admiralty have always stated that the War Office should be capable of dealing with a force of 70,000 men with light artillery, not because they think such a force would be sent or could be landed, but to make assurance doubly sure. Is it not possible to satisfy this condition during the next three months, and at the same time give Sir John French the necessary troops to take over the front from La Bassée, or even Lens, to the sea, as well as supplying Sir Ian Hamilton with the three extra divisions for which he has asked? That is a question which requires careful and detailed examination in relation to numbers, facts, and dates.

IV.—*The Dardanelles.*

The position at the Dardanelles is at once hopeful and dangerous. The longer it lasts the more dangerous it will become. The sooner it is settled the sooner everything can again, if desired, be concentrated on the French and Flemish front. The unexpected delays in beginning the military operations and the gradual manner in which the troops have been despatched have already given time for the Turks to make elaborate defensive preparations, to bring up reinforcements from Syria and elsewhere, and for the Germans to send submarines. If we delay longer in sending the necessary reinforcements, or send them piecemeal, we shall have in the end to send all, and more than all, that are now asked for, and we shall run the double risk of fighting the whole Turkish army in relays around the Kilid Bahr plateau, and of being seriously harassed by numbers of German submarines, which will certainly be attracted to the spot by the success which has attended the first one. It seems most urgent to try to obtain a decision here and wind up the enterprise in a satisfactory manner as soon as possible.

Neuve Chapelle and other battles in France have shown that our troops and the French, with adequate numbers and artillery, can storm the enemy's entrenchments. But no

strategic results are obtained in France and Flanders, as Lord Kitchener points out, from making, at an inordinate cost, an advance of 3 or 4 miles. For beyond the ground captured so dearly lies all the breadth of Flanders before even the Rhine is reached, and before the artillery of the attack can move forward and re-register, a new line of entrenchments not less strong than the old has been prepared by the enemy. But an advance of 3 or 4 miles in the Gallipoli Peninsula would produce strategic results of a decisive character. We have not at present enough high explosive shell for a sustained and continuous offensive in France, but the comparatively small quantities which are required at the Dardanelles are available. Here there is no room for new lines to be formed in rear, and no retreat for either side but into the sea. Every 500 yards gained here is an important step towards an imminent and vital result. And what a result!

As soon as our troops can obtain positions from which the Kilid Bahr plateau can be rendered untenable the whole Turkish army concentrated there is lost. As soon as the plateau of Kilid Bahr is in our hands the forts on the European side must be evacuated by the enemy. Those on the Asiatic are commanded from the European side. The door is thus opened to the Fleet, which at some moment in these operations will advance through the Narrows, sweeping the minefields methodically. Once the forts and minefields of the Narrows are passed there is nothing to stop the Fleet entering the Marmora, and, once in the Marmora, it is a few hours' steam to Constantinople. The Turco-German Fleet can then certainly be destroyed. Its destruction removes the menace which has hitherto prevented a Russian army from crossing the Black Sea and attacking Constantinople from the north. Although the Russian army which had been held ready to profit by our success has now been drawn away by more urgent interim needs, the Russians certainly will not let Constantinople fall without their participation. Bulgaria cannot remain indifferent to the movement and approach of these events. She will be inevitably forced to march on Adrianople, and with Bulgaria the whole of the Balkans must come out on our side. Any Turkish troops in other parts of the Gallipoli Peninsula will be incidentally cut off as soon as the Fleet severs the water communication with Chanak and closes the Bulair isthmus from both sides.

But the position of all the Turkish forces in Europe, whatever their numbers, is by the same series of events decisively affected. Their homes are in Asia, their food comes from Asia, their Government will have fled to Asia. They must fall into our hands with all their stores and artillery, as a mere by-product of the main operation. And all this depends on the conquest of 3 or 4 miles of ground! Where else in all the theatres of the war can we look during the next three months for a decisive victory, or for results of this extraordinary character?

The consequences of failure, on the other hand, are set out by Lord Kitchener in paragraph 32 of the War Office Note in a manner which leaves nothing to be said.

W. S. C.

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Lord Kitchener's review of the work done by the War Office under his direction, of the progress made in the vast organisation of the new armies, the orders issued and the measures taken for their equipment and the supply of munitions, constituted an impressive recital. The effect produced upon the Unionist Ministers was similar to that which is often produced upon the House of Commons when a Government, having long been raved at in the Press and on the platform, is at last in a fully-ranged debate permitted to expose its own case. Opinion declared itself increasingly favourable to the prosecution of the enterprise at the Dardanelles and generally in the sense of the views which I had set forth on the military problem. It was not, however, until the afternoon of June 7 that the first meeting of the Dardanelles Committee was convened. It was composed of:—The Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener, Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Balfour, Lord Curzon, Lord Selborne, Lord Crewe, and myself.

Mr. Lloyd George, though a member, was not present on this occasion. Indeed from this time forward and for some months he immersed himself in the production of munitions, and concentrated his whole energies upon the task.

The Committee addressed itself to the requests for reinforcements contained in Sir Ian Hamilton's telegram of May 17.

Lord Kitchener pronounced with the utmost decision in favour of prosecuting the campaign at the Dardanelles with the greatest vigour. He declared that he would reinforce Sir Ian Hamilton with three divisions of the New Army in addition to the Lowland Territorial Division, which had already been despatched under orders issued before the interregnum. He stated that he could not consent to remain responsible for the conduct of the war if it were decided to abandon the attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Council accepted this clear guidance not merely with relief but with satisfaction. Opinion was unanimous. The following conclusions were recorded:—

'1. To reinforce Sir Ian Hamilton with the three remaining divisions of the First New Army with a view to an assault in the second week of July.

'2. To send out the following naval units, which should be much less vulnerable to submarine attack than those under Admiral de Robeck's command:—

'*Endymion* and *Theseus* [light cruisers of the *Edgar* class just fitted with bulges].

'Four monitors with 14-inch guns.

'Six monitors with 9·2-inch guns.

'Four monitors with 6-inch guns, and one of the latter to follow later.

'Four sloops.

'Two "E" Class submarines, now *en route*.

'Four "H" Class submarines.'

It will be seen that the naval measures decided on by the new Board of Admiralty and the new War Council were in principle the same, slightly extended, as those which had been previously pressed by me upon Lord Fisher on the eve of his resignation. The military decisions were, however, on a far larger scale than any which Lord Kitchener had countenanced hitherto. Besides the two divisions which it was in contemplation to send on May 17 and May 30 respectively (one of

which had already gone), two others were added; and of the four divisions so assigned to Sir Ian Hamilton, three were to be divisions of the New Army, which was considered, perhaps unjustly, superior to the Territorial divisions at this period.

The conclusions of the Dardanelles Committee of June 7 were brought before the Cabinet on the 9th; and a very hot discussion arose on the general principle of whether the Dardanelles enterprise should be persevered in, or whether we should 'cut our loss' and come away. This was, in fact, going over the whole process by which the Dardanelles Committee had arrived at their conclusions. The sense of the Cabinet on the whole was, however, clearly with the Committee, and in the end it was agreed that the three divisions should go as reinforcements to Sir Ian Hamilton.

There was, however, from the outset to the end a duality of opinion in the Cabinet which, although it did not follow party lines, resembled a party cleavage, and at every stage in the rest of the Dardanelles operations caused serious embarrassment. Had the Prime Minister possessed or been able to acquire plenary authority, and had he been permitted to exercise it during May and June without distraction or interruption, it is my belief, based upon daily acquaintance with these transactions, that he would have taken the measures which even at this stage would have resulted in securing a decisive victory. But from the moment of the formation of the Coalition power was dispersed and counsels were divided, and every military decision had to be carried by the same sort of process of tact, temporising, and exhaustion which occurs over a clause in a keenly contested Bill in the House of Commons in time of peace. These facts are stated not with a view of making reproaches where all were equally sincere and equally well-meaning, but to explain the melancholy turn of events.

We had now at length got on June 9 the kind of decisions which were necessary to carry the enterprise through to success. There was no *military* reason of any kind why the

decisions which were reached on June 7 and June 9 should not have been taken within 48 hours of Sir Ian Hamilton's telegram of May 17. All the facts necessary to the decision were equally available on that date; all the troops were equally available; all the arguments were equally clamant. But from causes in which the enemy had no part, which arose solely from the confusion into which the governing instrument in this country had been thrown, from a fortnight to three weeks were lost for ever.

The consequences were momentous. Time was the dominating factor. The extraordinary mobility and unexpectedness of amphibious power can, as has been shown, only be exerted in strict relation to limited periods of time. The surprise, the rapidity, and the intensity of the attack are all dependent on the state of the enemy's preparations at a given moment. Every movement undertaken on one side can be matched by a counter movement on the other. Force and time in this kind of operation amount to almost the same thing, and each can to a very large extent be expressed in terms of the other. A week lost was about the same as a division. Three divisions in February could have occupied the Gallipoli Peninsula with little fighting. Five could have captured it after March 18. Seven were insufficient at the end of April, but nine might just have done it. Eleven might have sufficed at the beginning of July. Fourteen were to prove insufficient on August 7. Moreover, one delay breeds another.

The date of the next great attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula was governed by two factors—the arrival of the new army, and to a lesser extent by the state of the moon. It was considered that a surprise landing at a fresh point could best be effected on a moonless night. If therefore the dark period of July was missed, the operation in the particular form adopted must stand over till the similar period in August. It will be seen by reference to the decisions of the Dardanelles Committee of June 7 that they contemplated an attack in the

second week of July, and believed that the three new divisions would all have arrived by then. This would have been the most favourable moment. It could certainly have been achieved if the decision had been taken promptly on the receipt of Sir Ian Hamilton's telegram, or, if pending a general decision on policy, the despatch of reinforcements by divisions could have proceeded while the Government were considering the matter. But as it was, the troops that it was now decided to send did not or could not arrive in time for a July attack. The three New Army divisions did not, in fact, finish arriving until July had ended. Thus the great battle at Anzac and Suvla Bay was fought in the second week of August, instead of, as would have been perfectly practicable, in the early part of July. During the month that was thus lost, i.e., from the beginning of July to the beginning of August, *ten new Turkish divisions*, or their equivalents, besides important drafts, according to our now certain knowledge, reached the defenders of the Peninsula, and thus our new divisions, which we had at last decided to send, and which if sent in time would have given us a good superiority, were equated and cancelled out before they got to the spot. Moreover, in the interval our land forces were greatly wasted and reduced by sickness and casualties, and the fleet was exposed to continuous danger from submarines. The Germans acquired an ever-increasing control of the Turkish Army, and the whole methods of defence were in consequence far better organised. The defeats of the Russians in Galicia during June and July produced a marked change in the fighting spirit of the Turks on the Peninsula. The removal from Batoum of General Istomine's army, which was thrown into the main Russian battlefields, liberated the considerable forces which the Turks had been forced to keep concentrated at or near Midia to guard against a landing there. Before June was half over it became clear that the reinforcements could not reach the Dardanelles in time for a July battle. The second week in August was the earliest date when

the troops would be there, and the nights would be moonless.

All these considerations were present in my mind and filled me with intense anxiety about the issue of the next great effort. I therefore laboured by every means open to me to secure even larger reinforcements and above all their accelerated despatch. I asked on June 11 that the plan of placing the new army astride of the isthmus of Bulair should also be considered.

Memorandum by Mr. Churchill for the War Committee.

June 11, 1915.

At the beginning of the military operations at the Dardanelles the seizure of the Bulair isthmus would not have produced decisive results, because the Turks could have held the forts at the Narrows with comparatively small forces, who could be fed from the Asiatic shore, and could have attacked from both sides with the whole of their best troops our force holding the lines of Bulair or some similar position. The Narrows would still have been closed to the Fleet; and the army which was then available was not strong enough to operate except on very restricted ground.

But the situation has now completely changed. The flower of the Turkish army, all their Germans, the bulk of their artillery, is now massed around the Kilid Bahr plateau. They are held on two fronts by the southern Allied force and the Anzac corps respectively. They cannot afford to weaken their force at Kilid Bahr lest either one or both of the Allied attacks should be pressed home, in which case a great disaster would overtake them. On the other hand, to feed this large Turkish army, probably 70,000 strong, and to give it full supplies of ammunition and reinforcements, is a problem of great difficulty, failure in which means ruin to them. This army in the main is fed by the sea from Constantinople, and could not be fed without the sea. A supplemental line of supply passes along the Bulair isthmus, and this must be regarded by the mass of the Turkish army as their line of retreat. Any operation upon it must seriously affect their morale. It would be impossible to supply the large Turkish army at Kilid Bahr

from Constantinople along the Asiatic shore (260 miles over mountainous and roadless country as the crow flies). A trickle of supplies and troops from Smyrna may reach them, but that is wholly inadequate for an army of this size.

The Turks are therefore in a position of being tied absolutely to Kilid Bahr, and can be starved out there if the sea communications with Constantinople are stopped and if the Bulair isthmus is closed to them. If we now place a strong army astride of the Bulair isthmus, and if the First Lord of the Admiralty carries out his policy of placing the largest possible number of submarines in the Marmora, the above result would be obtained. The submarines could be replenished with food, fuel and torpedoes carried across the isthmus, and all could work together without the need of returning through the Straits.

It seems vital to us now to consider this operation in detail, as an alternative to the continuance of the frontal attacks from the two existing lodgments; and also to consider whether the troops now under orders for the Dardanelles are sufficient for the purpose. The British and French forces under Sir Ian Hamilton now on the peninsula have been so weakened by battle casualties and exhausted by their continual efforts that they cannot be expected to spare many men for a new point of attack; and it is important to keep them holding tight on to the Turks, and ready to profit by any weakening in their front. Are the three divisions of the New Army sufficient by themselves for such an enterprise if decided on? Would it not be prudent to send the two 1st line Territorial divisions now ready to form a fresh force of five divisions, *plus* the Territorial division already gone (if it can be spared from Sedd-el-Bahr), *plus* also every man that can be spared for a short time and a special effort from Egypt? Ought we not now to put these possibilities to Sir Ian Hamilton by telegraph fully and plainly?

W. S. C.

As the result of the discussion, Lord Kitchener sent the following telegrams to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

From War Office to Sir Ian Hamilton.

6 p.m., *June* 11, 1915.

Have you considered the advantage of landing troops on the Bulair isthmus, thereby cutting off the peninsula com-

pletely from the mainland and enabling us to send supplies overland to our submarines in the Sea of Marmora? What force do you consider would be required for such an operation? Do you consider that the troops landed would be liable to serious attack, and could they be adequately protected by the guns of the Fleet?

I presume that in view of the failure of the Bulgarians to carry them, the Bulair lines could not be captured without very severe fighting. If troops were landed and it was not possible to take the Bulair lines your force would be divided into three detachments.

Please telegraph me fully your views on this subject if possible, I should be glad if you would reply to-night.

War Office to Sir Ian Hamilton.

5.45 p.m., *June* 12, 1915.

The Government are anxious to learn your views as to whether it is possible to cut off all supplies from the Turks on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and thereby force them to abandon the peninsula.

By means of submarines the Navy hope to be able to stop communication by sea with Constantinople, and, assuming that to be the case, two avenues of communication would still be open to the Turks (1) via Bulair, and (2) from the Asiatic shore.

With regard to communication via Bulair, how do you consider that this line could best be stopped? On the isthmus, or somewhere between the Bulair lines and the Australian position, or by extending to the north the present Australian position? Or can you devise any other project to effect it?

With regard to communication from the Asiatic shore, we should like to know whether the Turks can obtain a large amount of supplies from across the Dardanelles. We fear that it would be difficult entirely to cut off this source, but it may be that heavy ammunition and supplies for a large force are not transportable, on which point you will no doubt inform us.

Please let us have a reply at the earliest possible moment.

Sir Ian Hamilton replied to the first of these telegrams on the 12th:—

General Sir Ian Hamilton to War Office.

12.5 a.m., *June* 12, 1915.

I have given long and earnest consideration to the advantages of landing troops on the Bulair Isthmus, but have had to abandon the idea on account of the disadvantages. I do not like to telegraph my views without again consulting the Admiral, as the matter is largely a naval one. I will confer with him early to-morrow morning and then telegraph you again.

The Bulair plan fell through largely because of naval difficulties. Admiral de Robeck's objections to it are set out in various telegrams both from himself and from Sir Ian Hamilton. The decision was taken against Bulair and in favour of an operation across the peninsula from Anzac, or its neighbourhood. The Prime Minister, in the discussion, had drawn the distinction between a 'starving operation,' such as the seizure of Bulair, and a 'storming operation' such as was now decided on. It seemed to me that, what with the time lost and the character of the new operation, Sir Ian Hamilton required more troops than those assigned to him, and I therefore began immediately to press Lord Kitchener on this point.

Mr. Churchill to Lord Kitchener.

June 15, 1915.

It is clear that Hamilton has been deterred from the Enos-Bulair project by naval rather than military reasons. If it is decided, as I presume it will be, to push through from the Anzac position, there ought to be no doubt about the force employed being ample, and there ought also to be a strong reserve at hand. It is not a 'starving,' but a 'storming' operation against the enemy's main army, and within gunshot of his main position. Further, the ground widens out to the northward, and we must be prepared for attacks by large forces from that direction upon a battlefield no longer restricted. It is reasonable to suppose that von Sanders will have taken whatever measures are open to him to guard against so obvious and vital a thrust.

Suppose the three first divisions now under orders do a great deal, but not all, and after three or four days' fighting are brought to a standstill with 10,000 or 15,000 casualties, both they and the enemy being exhausted; suppose two or three fresh divisions are then needed to carry the business through to complete success; and suppose there is nothing nearer than England, which means a month's delay, by the end of which you would have to begin all over again! There is my fear.

Prudence now would surely keep these extra divisions in Egypt under your own control, so that you can, if they are needed, put them in in a few days; and if not needed, how easy to bring them back!

My feeling is that you now have the opportunity and the means of settling this business, but that, if this chance fails, it will be very bad for the Government and for the country.

Lord Kitchener to Mr. Churchill.

June 16, 1915.

We have been keeping all available transport busily employed, sending out reinforcements to the Dardanelles. The Lowland Division, for instance, was sent as soon as we could possibly get ships to take it, ditto the 13th on Saturday.[1] (I hear that, though troops were embarked, the ships have not sailed.) These will be followed in due course by the 11th and 10th Divisions, which will land us well into July, probably about the end of the month, so we have our hands quite full till then. Later we will make up a further programme, if necessary, but it would be as well to see how things go before doing so.

Greece may come in. Bulgaria looks like demanding territory from Turkey. No time will be lost.

Mr. Balfour, however, by most strenuous exertions, was able to undertake the transport of additional troops. For this purpose he had recourse once again to the great liners

[1] Had the transport available been used steadily to carry troops from the date of Sir Ian Hamilton's demand, no difficulty would have arisen. The fall of the Government and the absence of any decision to reinforce the Dardanelles were the sole causes of delay. This delay is estimated by the Dardanelles Commission at six weeks.

Aquitania, *Mauretania* and *Olympic*. For several weeks the Admiralty had shrunk from using these giants on account of the awful consequences if they were sunk with seven or eight thousand men on board. The new First Lord, as he gradually began to measure and appraise the values and hazards in this terrible sphere, resolved to repeat the action which I had taken, providentially without misadventure, five weeks before. In the end, therefore, the two extra divisions were ordered to sail, and it seemed probable they would arrive in time for the August battle. Meanwhile, the Turks also on their side must be moving.

On June 18 I completed the following further general memorandum for the Cabinet. I endeavoured in this to show the relation which the attack on the Dardanelles took to the whole field of the war.

A Further Note upon the General Military Situation.

1. The following are the main facts about the general war situation:—

(*a*) The German armies have successfully defended their own territory, and have conquered Belgium and large areas in France and Poland. They will very likely clear Galicia.

(*b*) The British Navy has secured unquestioned command of the sea, and the naval forces of the Allies have an overwhelming and increasing preponderance; but the economic pressure on Germany has been largely mitigated by the action of neutrals.

(*c*) The Russian Army is so short of munitions that, though they may hold large forces on their front, no decisive intervention can be counted on from them for many months.

(*d*) The French offensive has up to the present failed completely. Their army is now at its maximum, and no expansion is possible.

(*e*) Italy has entered the war; but the effect of this cannot be measured yet.

(*f*) The increasing military strength of Great Britain.

Of the above facts, the first four are not likely to be substantially altered for some time, and the influence of the last two, though important, can only be secondary.

2. The Allies certainly hoped in the winter of 1914, when the German offensives in the direction both of Calais and Warsaw were arrested, that the spring of 1915 would witness the beginning of operations which would decisively clear French, Belgian, and Russian territory and carry our armies across the German frontier during the summer. From a survey of the present situation it would appear that the Allies have not succeeded so far in the campaign of 1915, and there is no reason to expect them to do so later in the year. Germany has proved her ability to defend her own soil and her conquests. She is actively engaged in defending Austria-Hungary, and will in return acquire the full authority to organise the whole resources of that Empire on the German model. She has no doubt taken every necessary measure to provide for the food of her people, their economic life, and the supply of her armies; and this also applies to Austria-Hungary in a lesser though increasing degree. We are not entitled to assume that any shortage in men, food, munitions, and money will prevent the Central Powers from maintaining the war at least until the year 1916 is far advanced. The confidence of the ruling classes of Germany in finding a satisfactory exit from the war has been re-established by the progress of the conflict during 1915; and this relief is reflected by the embarrassments of the Balkan States, whose interests and many of whose inclinations are with us, but who are in grave doubt of our final victory.

3. It is necessary to dwell a little upon the military situations in the Eastern and Western theatres.

Speaking broadly, it would appear that the endurance of the Russian Power can be counted on. The rioting at Moscow is unpleasant. But the heart of the people is sound, and it is in the interest of the rulers to continue. The Russians have shown themselves incapable of invading Germany, or of carrying on a sustained offensive against the German armies. As soon as the Russian armies come into the radius of the German strategic railways, concentrations can be made against them which have proved destructive in every case. The number of trains which can be moved north and south on the German side of the frontier is at least three times the com-

parable Russian figure. This superiority of lateral communication applied to an 800-mile front has also enabled the Germans to deliver offensive strokes of the most formidable character. The reputations of Hindenburg and Mackensen are founded largely on this pregnant fact. On the top of this comes the Russian failure of munitions. But a retirement of 100 or 200 miles enables the Russians to recover their strength, and deprives the enemy of his advantage: and so long as the Russians do not risk too much in keeping a forward station, but retire in good time when pressed hard, returning if the pressure stops, there is no reason why they should not do their share of containing the Germans and Austrians all through the winter of 1915 and take the offensive in ample superiority in the spring.

4. On May 9 General Joffre began his long-promised offensive in the Arras sector; 1,400 guns and 20 divisions were employed. He had limitless quantities of high explosive shell. He had the loyal co-operation of the British on his left. After a month the French state that along their whole line, but principally in the Arras sector, they have lost 220,000 men. The British in the fighting around Ypres (the salient of which has been held as an aid to the French offensive) and in the attacks on the Aubers ridge and towards La Bassée, have lost since April 22 4,000 officers and 96,000 men (exclusive of the most recent actions). The results are that the French have gained 1½ miles on a front of about 5, and the British have gained, in face of La Bassée, less than half the ground they have lost around Ypres. Out of approximately 19,500 square miles of France and Belgium in German hands we have recovered about 8.

All this hard and fruitless fighting would be tolerable if the German losses had been equal to our own. Unfortunately there are no reasons for such an assumption. It may be doubted whether the German losses in May and June in the western theatre are a third of the Anglo-French total. The enemy has been very silent about the fighting on this side and has proclaimed no triumph. It may be that he fears we shall desist from efforts which it is to his advantage we should continue, while he wins remarkable victories in the East.

5. If the small area of ground gained by the French possessed a decisive strategic value and was likely to lead to the ruptur-

ing of the German lines and a consequent general retirement, the heavy cost would be justified. The attack is still proceeding, and no limit should be assigned to the exertions of a brave army. But a few general observations may be permitted.

At the beginning of the war, before the French had learned to entrench, the concentrated fire of an artillery massed for the offensive against lightly protected field positions and troops in manœuvre was very effective. But now that the armies are dug into permanent lines, properly constructed and wired, lined with machine guns, and well supported by concealed artillery, the power of the defensive is as 3 or 4 to 1. We are therefore in the unsatisfactory position of having lost our ground before the defensive under modern conditions was understood, and having to retake it when the defensive has been developed into a fine art.

It may also be doubted whether the accidents and undulations of ground play so important a part in tactics as formerly. It is easy to speak of acquiring 'the heights which dominate Flanders' or 'the Vimy ridge which gives access to Douai,' etc. In fact, however, the armies have in the main settled down, not in selected positions, but along the actual lines of their chance collision when they came into contact, and both sides are maintaining themselves in all, or almost all, positions, good, bad, or indifferent. Therefore it does not seem safe to assume that particular slopes and heights possess tactical virtues of such supreme significance as to produce strategic results.

6. The events of the last five weeks in the eastern and western theatres make it the least fortunate period the Allies have experienced since the disasters of August last, and a continuance for another month or six weeks of similar results would produce very evil effects upon our general power. The French cannot afford to lose men at this rate for no return. Another quarter of a million shorn away will, together with the proved failure of their efforts to free their soil and the certainty of another winter's campaign, and the indefinite protraction of the war, produce depressing effects on the nation. Yet it is not easy to see what more we could have done to help them. Their attacks have been already made with all the guns and men possible to bring to bear upon a given point.

Even if we had had more troops ready, or had sent to France all those now employed at the Dardanelles, the numbers would not have been sufficient to effect a decisive change in the situation, or, indeed, to do more than produce casualties over a larger area. Numbers after a certain point do not count towards the solution of the problem in the western theatre. The power of the defensive there is a factor permanently superior to any preponderance of numbers likely to be acquired by either side.

7. It is remarkable that during eight months of trench warfare, ingenuity seems to have had so little success in discovering means of offence and advance. We are now somewhat readily accepting the proposition that high-explosive shells used in unprecedented and extraordinary quantities will achieve decisive results. This has certainly not been proved by the results so far attained by the French offensive. The power of concealed machine guns to check an advance, the limited area upon which the most ample bombardment can be made absolutely crushing, the magnitude of the preparations and the effort required, and the consequent delay in pursuing any advantage gained are all factors which tend to modify any too confident conclusions on this subject. The method is effective for clearing a few miles of ground; but its applicability to the reconquest of Flanders and the advance through Germany is doubtful.[1]

Anyhow, let us have the shells.

But the suggestions made in Colonel Hankey's paper of January 1, 1915, ought to have been developed in the long interval that has passed. The problem of crossing two or three hundred yards of open ground and of traversing or destroying barbed wire in the face of rifles and machine guns by night or under smoke screens which cut off artillery fire ought not to be beyond the range of modern science, if sufficient authority had backed the investigation. The absence of any satisfactory method cannot be supplied by the bare breasts of gallant men.

Meanwhile, unless it can be shown that the capture of 2 or 3

[1] I did not then know how powerfully this argument was to be strengthened. The abundant supplies of high-explosive shell which smashed the trenches in 1917 also rendered the ground to a large extent impassable, and thus substituted one obstacle for another.

miles of ground is likely to produce far-reaching and decisive strategic results, very grave reasons appear to exist against a continuance of the Anglo-French offensive.

It must be observed that this is no new view taken after the event. Six months ago (January 1), Mr. Lloyd George, Colonel Hankey, and myself, all working independently, submitted to the Prime Minister and to the Cabinet definite written statements in this sense. These opinions were generally accepted by the Cabinet, but the French and British generals in the field continued to make the most confident assertions to the contrary, and will no doubt continue to do so, in spite of all that has happened.

8. One of the most uncomfortable features of the war to the British Cabinet has been the absence of any true and timely knowledge of the French and Russian situations. The lack of any real co-ordination in the exertions and plans of the Allies has been evident at every stage; and this must be reckoned as one of the chief causes leading to the failure of the campaign of 1915. Hitherto we have not been a military partner of sufficient status to bring our influence markedly to bear on the counsels of our Allies. We have been forced to watch the British attack at Neuve Chapelle while the French remained wholly inactive. We have seen General Joffre embark on a great offensive about which we have all along felt the most serious misgivings, but to which we have conformed at heavy loss. We are now holding the Ypres salient and allowing the French to keep a detached army between Ypres and the sea in spite of arguments to the contrary, which seem clear, and have never been answered. If these discordances occur close at hand between armies intimately associated, the want of knowledge and of concert that prevails towards distant Russia, both on the part of France and Great Britain, can be imagined; and what do we know of Italy?

Unless the campaign of 1916 is to take the same unsatisfactory course as that of 1915 has so far taken, it appears vital to assert a far higher degree of common action and for the great belligerents to make plans together which, albeit after a painful interval, will offer the prospect of finality and set a term to the miseries of Europe.

9. The strain of the war presses in varying degrees upon the combatant Powers. Germany and Austria-Hungary have

no choice at present but to fight on, and the strain to which they are subjected is measured only by its physical effects. The first and governing of these is the wastage of military males. This is severe and irreparable; but it can be mitigated by making more use of the Austrian population, and by bringing youths of 18, 17, and even 16, of which the numbers are very large in Germany, into military service of one kind or another, and by using the enormous number of prisoners of war as slaves for unskilled domestic labour. We have not yet got, as we ought to have, the results of a thorough and scientific inquiry into the military male populations of the belligerent countries. But it would be imprudent to count on the Central Powers putting less than 6,000,000 men in the ranks of their active armies in the spring of 1916.

400,000 or 500,000 should be added to this total on account of Turkey, unless that Power has been knocked out decisively.

Great Britain has not suffered at all from the war except financially, and is developing her military strength in a leisurely but steady manner. We ought not to be content to begin the spring of 1916 with less than 2,000,000 men continuously maintained in the active army at the front. This would mean a total force of 3,000,000, and provision against wastage thereafter.

But in this case the governing factor will be rifles, and I apprehend that the equivalent of 1,500,000 men in the field is the most that can at present be provided for by May 1.

Italy comes in fresh, but it will tax her resources and temper to maintain 1,000,000 soldiers in contact with the enemy up to May, 1916, and onwards. The danger of the German armies being turned from Russia on to Italy seems certainly more real than their renewal of an offensive in the west.

France has reached her maximum, and presents a force of 2,000,000 men in the active army, well sustained by another 1,000,000 behind. But of all the great combatants France has suffered most, in the conquest and alienation of her territory and in the proportion of her killed, wounded, and captured to her limited population. She has not the reserves of youth that are coming on in Germany. She is cruelly oppressed by the war, which, unlike the Germans, she did not seek, and whose conditions are not favourable to the French offensive genius. No gleam of success has come to her arms.

France is also the belligerent to whom an attractive peace proposition can most easily be made. The comforting and sustaining of France through another winter campaign is a matter of very high consequence.

Russia, then, alone offers the means of providing the Allies with the very large numerical preponderance which they will require to wear down the armies of the Central Powers. To acquire influence over Russia, to organise and equip her is the most important need. By May, 1916, Russia ought to have between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 men in the line. The balance of active armies would then stand: Central Powers 6,000,000, Allies 8,000,000 or 9,000,000, with larger resources for replenishment on our side than on the enemy's. If by then we have induced Bulgaria, Greece, and Roumania to enter the conflict, with active armies aggregating, with Serbia and Montenegro (say) 1,000,000 men, the final result should be certain.

The above figures are general approximations, and, though I believe them to give a true impression, they are not the result of precise calculation.

10. However these vast problems are approached, the dominant needs emerge in clear sequence.

First, to re-equip Russia for 1916.
Secondly, to rally the Balkan States against Austria and Turkey, thus forcing the Central Powers to bleed along a new front, and at the same time protecting Italy.
Thirdly, to nurse France through the winter.

But in order that a voice may be heard amid the indistinct murmurings or unconvincing assertions of the various Governments, it is necessary that one of the Powers should speak, not only with the consciousness of a clear policy, but with the indispensable prestige of victory. It is open to Great Britain now to take the necessary lead in the Allied Councils. She commands the sea. In that respect her primary weapon has vindicated itself even more decisively than the German army. She wields the power of the purse. She is becoming an important arsenal of munitions. Her military strength, which has for some months been respectable, is growing substantially. She only requires victory to give her the ascendancy without which no good common action is to be expected.

11. There can be no doubt that we now possess the means and the power to take Constantinople before the end of the summer if we act with decision and with a due sense of proportion. The striking down of one of the three hostile Empires against which we are contending, and the fall to our arms of one of the most famous capitals in the world, with the results which must flow therefrom, will, conjoined with our other advantages, confer upon us a far-reaching influence among the Allies, and enable us to ensure their indispensable co-operation. Most of all, it will react on Russia. It will give the encouragement so sorely needed. It will give the reward so long desired. It will render a service to an Ally unparalleled in the history of nations. It will multiply the resources and open the channel for the re-equipment of the Russian armies. It will dominate the Balkan situation and cover Italy. It will resound through Asia. Here is the prize, and the only prize, which lies within reach this year. It can certainly be won without unreasonable expense, and within a comparatively short time. But we must act now, and on a scale which makes speedy success certain.

W. S. C.

June 18, 1915.

CHAPTER XX

THE DARKENING SCENE

Strategy of Hindenburg and Ludendorff—The Austrian Plan—Gorlice-Tarnow—The Great Russian Retreat—On the Gallipoli Peninsula—Action of June 4—Action of June 28—Failure in the Supply of British Drafts—Scarcity of Artillery Ammunition—Admiral von Usedom's Correspondence with the German Emperor—Successful Measures Against the U-Boat Attack—British Submarines in the Marmora—Exploits and Adventures—Nasmith and Boyle—Losses and Achievements—The Turkish Sea Communications Cut—My July Memorandum—Appreciations and Forecasts—Increasing Danger to the Balkans—The German Point of View—The True German Objective—My Letter to Sir Ian Hamilton—The Actual Facts—Egyptian Obscurities—Ammunition Supply—The Eve of Battle.

MAY and June saw the beginning of the great Russian retreat. Up till the end of March the strategy of Hindenburg and Ludendorff had aimed at the encirclement and capture of entire Russian armies. They had made their first cast towards Warsaw in November, 1914, but the German and Austrian forces were not strong enough to sustain so ambitious a conception, and the attempt was skilfully frustrated by the Grand Duke. They tried a second cast in January—this time Northward against the Russian armies in East Prussia. But although nearly 100,000 prisoners were captured in the fearful winter battle of the Masurian Lakes, the bulk of the Russian armies slipped away as the Germans closed round them, and no strategic result was attained. 'The plan was good and this time the forces employed were adequate, but the season was badly chosen and the difficulties of a winter campaign under-estimated.'[1] By the beginning of March, 1915, the entire Eastern front had again subsided into

[1] General von François: a German authority.

trench warfare, and on March 22 Przemysl fell to the Russian Southern group of armies, setting free large Russian forces for the invasion of Hungary. The second Hindenburg-Ludendorff attempt to procure a supreme decision in the East had failed. But now a suggestion came from the Austrian Chief-of-the-Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, to force the Russians out of the trenches by a break through on a limited front. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, still intent upon repeating Tannenberg, opposed the Austrian plan, and wished in spite of their previous disappointments to achieve strategic results by undertaking another enveloping operation from the north on an even larger scale. For this the German Main Headquarters could find neither the men nor the munitions which were needed, and on April 4 Falkenhayn, who had succeeded Moltke as Chief of the German General Staff, decided to adopt the Austrian conception and to attempt a break through between Gorlice and Tarnow as Conrad von Hötzendorf had proposed. Tarnow lies in Galicia, near Cracow, at the junction of the Biala and the Dunajecs Rivers, and Gorlice, just north of the Carpathians, is about twenty-five miles south-east of Tarnow. The sector of attack lay on the south side of the Russian salient in Galicia, so that a considerable portion of the Russian front lay to the west of the German line of advance, under the menace of being cut off should it succeed. The blow was an uppercut.

The German-Austrian attack began on May 2. It had been entrusted to Mackensen. Aided by poison gas and a tremendous artillery, the attack was immediately successful, both the first and second Russian positions being captured. The strategic instinct of Conrad von Hötzendorf was also to be vindicated, for the Grand Duke Nicholas, rather than allow the troops on either side of the gap to be taken in flank, withdrew the whole line in this part of the front. This process of attack on a limited front was repeated continuously by the Germans during the months that followed, and each time it

induced large withdrawals of the Russian line, culminating in the clearance of the whole of Galicia and Poland, and the fall one after another of all the fortresses and towns on which the Russian armies had rested.

As this sombre development was recorded day after day during June and July on our maps, Lord Kitchener became increasingly anxious. He feared that Russia would collapse entirely, and that the Germans would then transfer immense forces from the Eastern to the Western front. He persuaded himself, on more than one occasion, that this transference was already in progress and that a hostile offensive in France was imminent. For reasons which have been abundantly explained I could not share these apprehensions, and I endeavoured to combat them on every occasion. I believed that the Russians would succeed in retaining very large Austro-German armies on their front for an indefinite period. I did not believe that the Germans had any intention of abandoning their drive against Russia or of going back and reopening an offensive in the West. Lastly, I pointed continuously to victory at the Dardanelles as the sole and supreme remedy open to us for the evils of our situation.

* * * * *

While Ministerial changes and Cabinet discussions had been taking place at home, the situation at the Dardanelles and on the Gallipoli Peninsula had passed through several critical phases. On May 19 the Turks, having received news of the arrival of German submarines, made a most determined and serious effort to drive the Anzacs into the sea. The attack, in which four divisions comprising 30,000 Turkish infantry took part, was maintained for many hours both in darkness and in daylight. It was completely and decisively repulsed at every point. When it ceased the Turks had lost at least 5,000 men, and 3,000 of their dead lay in front of the Anzac trenches. The British loss, on the other hand, did not exceed

600. On the morrow the Turkish Commander asked for an armistice to bury the dead and collect the wounded, and this was conceded by Sir Ian Hamilton.

'After May 19,' said the Turkish War Office when the war was over, 'it was realised that the British defence at Anzac was too strong to enable us to effect anything against it without heavy artillery with plenty of ammunition, and since our own position was also very strong in defence, two weak divisions were left in the trenches and the other two were withdrawn.'

The position at Anzac was henceforward unchallenged.

On June 4 a general attack was delivered by the British and French along the whole front at Helles. In this action the 29th Division, the 42nd Division, the 2nd Naval Brigade and both French Divisions took part. The Allied forces numbered about 34,000 infantry and the Turks 25,000. Despite a woeful deficiency in artillery and ammunition, the British troops stormed the trenches of the Turkish centre. The French gained ground on the right; but were afterwards driven back by counter-attacks. This exposed the flank of the Naval and 42nd Divisions who were in succession compelled to yield up the greater part of their gains. In the end the general line of the Allies was advanced by no more than two or three hundred yards. The battle was costly for both sides. The Turkish losses amounted to 10,000, and those of the British alone to an equal number. As in all the battles on the Peninsula, the issue hung in a trembling balance. The Turks were thrown into such confusion that on only two kilometres of their front no less than twenty-five battalions (or parts of battalions) were mingled in the line without any higher organisation. In these straits the Turkish Divisional Commander reported that no further British attack could be resisted. In a heated conference the Turkish Chief-of-the-Staff advised the withdrawal of the whole front to Achi Baba. It was only with the greatest difficulty and by the enemy's good luck that the in-

termingled troops were relieved by a fresh Turkish division on the night of June 7.

On June 21 another important action was fought by the French Corps, which attacked with great spirit on the right of the Helles Front, captured the Haricot Redoubt and made a substantial advance. A portion of these gains were wrested from them the next day by a Turkish counter-attack.

A week later, June 28, the British being reinforced by the 52nd Division, made a general attack on the left of the Helles Front. Five lines of trenches were captured, and an advance of about 1,000 yards was secured. The Turkish force engaged comprised 38,000 infantry with 16 field and 7 heavy batteries. The fire of the ships was, on this occasion, found to be most effective, and the success of the attack again led to critical discussions at the Turkish Headquarters. The German General, Weber, now commanding the Southern zone, wished to withdraw the whole front to the Kilid Bahr Plateau. Liman von Sanders, however, overruled him and demanded instead a speedy counter-attack. For this purpose, two fresh Turkish divisions were brought into the line, and a fierce surprise assault was delivered before dawn on July 5. The Turks were repulsed with a loss of 6,000 men.

'The affair of the 28th,' said General Callwell in his cool and instructed account of the Campaign,[1] 'following closely Gouraud's stroke on the opposite flank seemed to suggest that if there had been a plentiful reserve to throw into the scale at this juncture on the Helles Front, this might have proved the psychological moment for initiating a determined effort to secure Krithia, the high ground beyond that coveted village, and even possibly Achi Baba itself; no such reserves were, however, available.' The paralysis of the British Executive during the formation of the Coalition Government and the education of its new ministers had effectually withheld this boon.

A third attack along the whole front was delivered with

[1] Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell: *The Dardanelles*, p. 160.

such ammunition and troops as could be found on July 12-13. The general line was advanced from 200 to 400 yards, but no important results were obtained. It had been evident from the beginning of July that considerable reinforcements were reaching the Turks. On the other hand, the British Army was woefully reduced by wastage and casualties. Already by the middle of May, after the first battles, the infantry of Sir Ian Hamilton's five divisions were 23,000 men, or 40 per cent below their war establishment. These deficiencies were never overtaken by the drafts supplied by the War Office. The 52nd Division and various minor reinforcements dribbled in during June, but did little more than keep pace with the wastage. While the new divisions were on the sea, the old divisions were dwindling. During the whole of May, June and July, the total of the British Forces on the Peninsula and at Anzac never exceeded 60,000 men.

Even more discouraging than depleted battalions was the scarcity of ammunition. 'During the months of June and July,' said Gen. Simpson-Baikie—who commanded the British Artillery[1]—'the total number of rounds of 18-pdr. ammunition at Cape Helles never reached 25,000. Before one of our attacks it used to reach its maximum which was about 19,000 to 23,000. The total amount of 18 pdr. therefore was limited to about 12,000 rounds, as it was necessary to keep 6,000 to 10,000 rounds in reserve to guard against Turkish counter-attacks. As there was no high-explosive shell for the 18-pdr. (except 640 rounds expended on June 4) only shrapnel could be used, and it is well known that shrapnel is but little use for destroying hostile trenches.' On July 13 only 5,000 rounds for the field artillery remained at Helles, and all active operations had, perforce, to be suspended.

The weight of field-gun ammunition available to prepare and support the British assaults in any of these battles on the Peninsula never exceeded 150 tons. For the purpose of judg-

[1] Gallipoli Diary, Appendix I, 281; Statement of Major-General Simpson-Baikie.

ing the scale of the artillery preparation, this may be compared with over 1,300 tons fired in the first two days of the battle of Loos at the end of September in the same year; and with upwards of 25,000 tons often fired in two days during the August offensive of 1918. The rifle and machine-gun fire of the defence on each occasion remained a constant factor. Hard tasks were therefore set to the troops in Gallipoli, and the fact that the issue hung continually in the balance is the measure of their bravery and devotion.[1]

* * * * *

The fact that during all this period the British Fleet neither attacked nor threatened the forts at the Narrows nor attempted to sweep the minefields enabled the German and Turkish Commanders to draw upon the medium and mobile artillery which defended the Straits for the purpose of succouring the Fifth Turkish Army in its desperate struggle. The first transferences began on April 27. On May 23 Admiral von Usedom, who on April 26 had assumed command of the Fortress of the Dardanelles and of all the Marine Defences of the Straits, reported to the Emperor that he had up

[1] The whole story of the artillery at Helles may be summed up in the following sentences: insufficiency of guns of every nature; insufficiency of ammunition of every nature, especially of H.E.; insufficient provision made by the Home Authorities for spare guns, spare carriages, spare parts, adequate repairing workshops, or for a regular daily, weekly, or monthly supply of ammunition; guns provided often of an obsolete pattern and so badly worn by previous use as to be most inaccurate; lack of aeroplanes, trained observers and of all the requisites for air observation; total failure to produce the trench mortars and bombs to which the closeness of the opposing lines at Helles would have lent themselves well—in short, total lack of organisation at home to provide even the most rudimentary and indispensable artillery requisites for daily consumption; not to speak of downright carelessness which resulted in wrong shells being sent to the wrong guns, and new types of fuses being sent without fuse keys and new types of howitzer shells without range tables. These serious faults provoked their own penalties in the shape of the heavy losses suffered by our infantry and artillery, which might have been to a great measure averted if sufficient forethought and attention had been devoted to the 'sideshow' at the Dardanelles. *Ibid*, p. 287.

to that date, under protest, already yielded to the Army the following artillery:—

Six 8.2-inch mortars, eight 6-inch field howitzers, two 4.7-inch quick-firing field howitzers, nine 4.7-inch field howitzers, twelve 4.7-inch siege guns, and twelve field guns. In all forty-nine pieces.

These transferences took place gradually during the month.

During June and July the Fifth Turkish Army in its distress made ever-increasing inroads upon the artillery defence of the Straits. Writing to the Emperor on July 20, Admiral von Usedom again revealed his anxiety at the denudation of the marine artillery.

'The struggle of the Fifth Army against the forces landed by the enemy entails great sacrifices and has so far resulted in no advantage to the defence. In my judgment there is no prospect of driving the enemy into the sea. In fact I believe it is only possible merely to hold him to the ground which he has already won if large supplies of ammunition and reinforcements of men are provided. As I mentioned in my telegram, the Minister of War has decided against my advice that the Army should be handed over all the fortress guns and munitions which it demands. A systematic preparation of second-line defences in case the Army should not be able to hold its ground was set aside as out of the question. What the fortress has already provided in munitions and guns the attached list shows.[1] I forward also with all respect a copy of my appre-

[1] This list shows that from the beginning of the fighting in Gallipoli to July 20 the following howitzers, guns and ammunition had been diverted from the Dardanelles defences to the 5th Turkish Army:—

No. of Guns.	Calibre.	Ammunition.
14	8.2-inch Howitzers (Mortars) . .	548 rounds.
8	6 " Field Howitzers Patt. 93 .	2,118 "
3	6 " Q.F. Howitzers . . .	2,024 "
2	4.7 " Q.F. Howitzers . . .	260 " (about).
6	4.7 " Field Howitzers . . .	1,178 "

Besides these 33 howitzers which were a vital factor in the defences of the Narrows, 50 smaller guns and 12,000 shells were collected from the German and Turkish warships, from Constantinople, and from the Fortress transferred to the Army.

ciation of the situation addressed to the Minister of War, and of the orders issued by me.

'Your Imperial and Royal Majesty will see from this that it was my endeavour to maintain the system of fortifications of the Straits at such a strength that it would again be self-sufficing in case of any weakening of resistance on land. Since the verdict has gone against my view I have ceded batteries to the Army, thus weakening the naval defences. The aircraft have also been removed from the sea defences. But in this case there is a partial substitute in the recently arrived German naval hydroplanes.'

And again:—

'How long the Fifth Army can hold the enemy is more than I can prophesy. If no ammunition comes through from Germany, it can only be a question of a short time. This is shown by the numerous proposals for support and relief, together with the study of their establishments and their casualties. The fortress system itself has suffered from the transfers which I have reported, and for it also the speedy arrival of German ammunition is a matter of life and death. The opinion of Turkish General Headquarters appears to me to incline to a hazardous optimism. It is certainly not clearly realised there what is involved for the supreme command of the Central Powers here in the Dardanelles if the means of war at present available are found to be insufficient. Everything must be done by Turkey, even at risk of sacrifice to herself, to get German ammunition through the Balkan countries and by that means stabilise the battle.'

These efforts met with no success and on August 16 Admiral von Usedom reported to the Emperor that 'the attempts of bringing ammunition ordered in Germany through Rumania have all failed.' He was therefore forced to endure his precarious situation month after month.

It must, however, be observed that whereas the Turkish shortage of ammunition arose from causes beyond their control, the British shortage sprang solely from lack of decision

in the distribution of the available quantities between the various theatres of war.

* * * * *

The measures taken to cope with the German submarine attack upon our communications followed in the main the lines which have been indicated and proved, broadly speaking, completely successful. The Fleet was kept in the shelter of Mudros harbour; battleships were only exposed when required for some definite operation, and the ordinary support of the Army by fire from the sea was afforded during June by destroyers and light vessels.

This was found to be sufficient. The observation and direction of the ships' fire attained every week a higher efficiency. This process continued steadily until naval co-operation in land fighting on Gallipoli had become a factor of the utmost value. In July the monitors and 'bulged' cruisers began to arrive. Thenceforward the fire of the Turkish guns from Asia was controlled and largely quelled. The four large monitors armed with 14-inch guns, four medium monitors armed with 9·2 or 6-inch guns, and four 'bulged' cruisers (*Theseus*, *Endymion*, *Grafton* and *Edgar*) were all on the scene by the end of that month. Had action been taken when it was first proposed to Lord Fisher, the arrival of these vessels would have been antedated by more than three weeks. But the interval was passed without serious disadvantage to the Army: and when the whole Monitor Fleet had arrived, the Naval support of the troops was not only fully restored, but much enhanced.

Meanwhile the supply of the Army was maintained by the use of large numbers of small shallow-draft vessels and proceeded uninterruptedly, so that by the middle of July reserves of twenty-four days' rations had been accumulated for all troops ashore at Helles and Anzac. The reinforcements sent from home were conveyed to their destination, although sev-

eral transports were torpedoed, and in one case a thousand lives were lost. It is remarkable that neither monitors, bulged cruisers, nor shallow-draught vessels were ever seriously attacked or threatened by submarines. Lastly, the great netted areas proved an effective deterrent against submarine attack. Although warships of every kind were continually moving about within them, they were in no case molested during the whole of the campaign. Thus, what had seemed to be a danger potentially mortal was entirely warded off by suitable measures perseveringly applied on a sufficient scale.

While the submarine attack upon the British sea communications was being frustrated, a far more effective pressure was being brought to bear upon the enemy. In December, 1914, Lieutenant-Commander Norman Holbrook had gained the Victoria Cross by diving his submarine B 11 under the minefields of the Dardanelles and sinking the Turkish cruiser *Messudieh*. On April 17 this desperate enterprise had been again attempted by submarine E 15 in conjunction with Sir Ian Hamilton's impending landing. The effort failed. The vessel ran aground in the Straits near Dardanos; her Captain, Lieutenant-Commander T. S. Brodie, was killed; most of her crew were captured and her carcass, after being fiercely contended for, was finally shattered by a torpedo from a British picket-boat. On April 25, while the landing was in progress, the Australian submarine AE 2, undeterred by the fate of her forerunner, most gallantly and skilfully dived through and under the minefields and succeeded in entering the Sea of Marmora. Here from the 25th to the 30th she attacked the Turkish shipping and sank a large gunboat. On April 30, however, being damaged and unable to dive properly, she was herself sunk, after a two hours' fight, by a Turkish torpedo boat. But the way had been re-opened. The passage, whatever its perils, was shown to be still not impossible. The losses of these two boats, which so greatly disturbed Lord Fisher, did not prevent a sublime perseverance. On

April 27, E 14 under Lieutenant-Commander C. Boyle dived at 95 feet through the minefield, passed Kilid Bahr at 22 feet under the fire of all the forts and torpedoed a Turkish gunboat near Gallipoli. From this time forward, till the end, one or more British submarines continuously operated in the Sea of Marmora, and their attacks upon the Turkish water communications, almost by themselves, achieved the ruin of the enemy.

E 14 remained in the Sea of Marmora from April 27 to May 18, continually hunted by torpedo boats and other patrol craft, and fired on so constantly that she could scarcely find breathing space to re-charge her batteries and keep herself alive. Nevertheless she wrought decisive havoc on the Turkish transports. On the 29th she attacked two and sank one. On May 1 she sank a gunboat. On May 5 she attacked another transport and drove others back to Constantinople. On the 10th she attacked two transports convoyed by two Turkish destroyers, and fired at both. The second transport was a very large vessel, full of troops; a terrific explosion followed the impact of the torpedo, and the transport sank rapidly. An entire infantry brigade and several batteries of artillery, in all upwards of 6,000 Turkish soldiers, were drowned. This awful event practically arrested the movement of Turkish troops by sea. E 14 had now no torpedoes, and on May 17 she received wireless orders to return. On the 18th she again ran the gauntlet of the Forts at 22 feet, and dived, as she thought, under the minefields. She must, however, have passed right through the lines of mines in extreme danger.

Commander Nasmith in E 11 entered the Marmora on the following day. His vessel was newly equipped with a 6-pounder gun, and cruised for some days lashed alongside a sailing vessel, sinking a gunboat and several ships. On May 25 Commander Nasmith dived E 11 literally into Constantinople, and hit with a torpedo a large vessel alongside the

arsenal. E 11 grounded several times and escaped with great difficulty from the enemy's harbour. She now established a reign of terror in the Marmora, attacking unsuccessfully the battleship *Barbarossa*, fighting with destroyers, sinking store-ships and steamers, with continued hair-breadth escapes from destruction. On June 7 she returned through the mine-field, actually fouling a mine which she carried on her port hydroplane for a considerable distance while under heavy fire from the Forts. She had been in the Marmora for nineteen days, and had sunk 1 gunboat, 3 transports, 1 ammunition ship and 3 store-ships.

On June 10 Commander Boyle made his second entry into the Marmora where he remained for twenty-three days, sinking 1 large steamer and 13 sailing vessels. E 12 (Lieutenant-Commander Bruce) and E 7 (Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane) passed the Straits on the 20th and 30th June respectively, destroyed between them 7 steamers and 19 sailing vessels, and fired repeatedly on the roads and railways along the coast.

A new peril was now to be added to the passage. In the middle of July the Turks completed the Nagara anti-submarine net. This net was made in 10-foot meshes of 3-inch, strengthened with 5-inch wire, and except for a small gateway, completely closed the passage to a depth of over 220 feet. This barrier was guarded by five motor-gun-boats armed with depth charges, and by numerous guns specially placed.

On July 21 Commander Boyle, for the third time, made the passage of the Straits in E 14. A mine scraped past her near the Narrows without exploding, and by good luck she passed through the gate of the net at Nagara. On July 22 she met E 7 in the Marmora, and both vessels together continued their depredations upon shipping. All hospital ships were spared,

although their increase in numbers showed that they were being used for military transport. Commander Boyle's final return on August 12, i.e., his sixth passage of the minefield, was thus described by him:—

I missed the gate and hit the net. It is possible the net now extends nearly the whole way across. I was brought up from 80 feet to 45 feet in three seconds, but luckily only thrown 15 degrees off my course. There was a tremendous noise, scraping, banging, tearing and rumbling, and it sounded as if there were two distinct obstructions, as the noise nearly ceased and then came on again, and we were appreciably checked twice. It took about 20 seconds to get through. I was fired at on rounding Kilid Bahr, and a torpedo was fired at me from Chanak, breaking surface a few yards astern of me. A mile southwest of Chanak I scraped past a mine, but it did not check me—after I got out I found some twin electric wire round my propellers . . . and various parts of the boat were scraped and scored by wire.

On August 5 E 11 (Commander Nasmith) had made her second passage of the Straits. A mine bumped heavily along her side off Kephez point at a depth of 70 feet. To break the net at Nagara she dived to 110 feet and then charged. The net caught her bow and she was drawn violently upward. Under the strain the wires of the net snapped with a crack, and the submarine was freed. An hour later she torpedoed a transport; all day she was harassed by patrol craft; at dawn the next morning she was attacked by the bombs of an aeroplane. Later in the day she torpedoed a gunboat. On the 7th she was in action with troops on the roads along the coast. On the 8th she torpedoed and sank the battleship *Barbarossa*, which, escorted by two destroyers, was hurrying to the Peninsula during the Battle of Suvla Bay. These adventures and exploits continued without cessation during twenty-nine days, at the end of which E 11 returned safely, having sunk or destroyed 1 battleship, 1 gunboat, 6 transports, 1 steamer and 23 sailing vessels.

The perilous duty was taken up successively by E 2, E 7, E 12, H 1 (Lieutenant Pirie) and E 20 (Lieutenant-Commander Clyfford Warren), as well as by the French submarine *Turquoise*. In all, the passage of Nagara was made twenty-seven times. Every one of these voyages is an epic in itself. Out of thirteen British and French submarines which made or attempted the passage into the Marmora, eight perished—four with all or nearly all hands. Besides E 15 and AE 11, whose fates have been described, Cochrane's E 7 was caught in the Nagara net on September 4. Bombed with depth charges for 16 hours, and having tried to fall through the bottom of the net by sinking to the excessive depth of 40 fathoms, Cochrane at last rose to the surface and finding himself inextricably enmeshed, ordered his crew to jump overboard, and sank his vessel with his own hands. His subsequent escapes from the Turks and adventures in captivity, are an amazing tale of courage and pertinacity. Of the French submarines three were destroyed or captured at the entrance or in the net: *Saphir* in January; *Joule* in May; and *Mariotte* on July 26. The *Turquoise* was the only French submarine which achieved the passage, and she was disabled and captured after a brief career in the Marmora on October 30. In the captain's cabin of the *Turquoise* the enemy found his notebook, which he had forgotten to destroy. This notebook contained the rendezvous at which the *Turquoise* was to meet the British submarine E 20 on November 6. The German submarine U 14 was repairing at Constantinople. *She* kept the rendezvous, and E 20 expecting a friend, was blown to pieces by the torpedo of a foe.[1]

In all, the British submarines destroyed in the Marmora 1 battleship, 1 destroyer, 5 gun-boats, 11 transports, 44 steamers and 148 sailing vessels. The effect of the virtual stoppage of the Turkish sea communication was most serious

[1] 'U-boote gegen U-boote,' by Lieutenant zur See von Heimburg (*Die Woche*, March 10, 1917).

to the enemy; and towards the end of June the Turkish army was reduced to the narrowest margin of food and ammunition. It was only by great exertions and in the nick of time that the land route was organised sufficiently to bear the strain. Henceforward the whole supply of the Peninsula was dependent upon 100 miles of bullock transport over a single road, itself vulnerable from the sea.

The Naval History of Britain contains no page more wonderful than that which records the prowess of her submarines at the Dardanelles. Their exploits constitute in daring, in skill, in endurance, in risk, the finest examples of submarine action in the whole of the Great War, and were, moreover, marked by a strict observance of the recognised rules of warfare. When one thinks of these officers and men, penned together amid the intricate machinery which crammed their steel, cigar-shaped vessels; groping, butting, charging far below the surface at unmeasured, unknown obstructions; surrounded by explosive engines, any one of which might destroy them at a touch; the target of guns and torpedoes if they rose for an instant to the light of day; harried by depth charges, hunted by gun-boats and destroyers, stalked by the German U-boat; expecting every moment to be shattered, stifled, or hopelessly starved at the bottom of the sea; and yet in spite of all, enduring cheerfully such ordeals for weeks at a time; returning unflinchingly again and again through the Jaws of Death—it is bitter indeed to remember that their prowess and devotion were uncrowned by victory.

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In the middle of July I prepared and printed the following general appreciation, and ventured upon a forecast of the action of Germany and Bulgaria which, alas, proved only too true. After paragraphs reciting events with which the reader is already familiar, this memorandum proceeded:

Until the decision of June 8 had been satisfactorily taken and ratified by the Cabinet on June 9, I did not dare to raise the question of further reinforcements, though they were obviously necessary, but on June 12 I wrote to the Secretary of State urging that the two first-line Territorial Divisions which still remained in England should be sent to the Eastern Mediterranean. After repeated discussions at the Cabinet and at the War Councils, this was eventually settled on July 6, and Sir Ian Hamilton was definitely informed. It is now perfectly obvious that both these Divisions will be required, but the Cabinet, in assenting to the despatch of the second of the two, stipulated that it should be kept at Alexandria, and, as I understand it, the Commander-in-Chief has not yet been given full liberty to use this Division as he may think best.

While this long delay in the despatch of troops available all the time has been taking place, the enemy has not been idle, and the situation has been continually modifying itself to our disadvantage. The Turks have been able to bring up in succession one Division after another from different parts of their Empire, and to raise new levies of men. Although this process has been powerfully counteracted by the vigorous action of our army, continually harassing and wearing out the enemy, he has now been able to bring up reserves, of a strength we cannot accurately measure, which would not have been available a month ago.

. . . There was no military reason why the original attack of April 25 should not have been delivered before the end of March with all the troops that were employed on the latter date and the addition of several other Divisions sent subsequent to that date. In this case a complete victory might have been won.

Secondly, there was no military reason that the attack which is now impending should not have been delivered at the end of June or the beginning of July. The only reason for the delay is that the governing instrument here has been unable to make up its mind except by very lengthy processes of argument and exhaustion, and that the divisions of opinion to be overcome, and the number of persons of consequence to be convinced, caused delays and compromises. We have always sent two-thirds of what was necessary a month too late.

We are now on the eve of a most critical battle in the Gallipoli Peninsula. If we are successful, results of the greatest magnitude will follow, and the fall of Constantinople will dominate the whole character of the great war and throw all other events into the shade. If we fail to obtain a decision and only make some progress, but not enough, then some of the gravest and most painful problems will arise. The precious time that has been lost can never be retrieved. The German is drawing nearer from the north, the windy weather is coming on, Roumania may succumb to German pressure and release munitions for Turkey, Serbia may be smitten down and pierced, and Bulgaria (now almost within our reach) may realise that her aspirations can only be satisfied at German hands. Although we have all along had resources available which would have placed the issue of this battle beyond doubt, it can now only be regarded as one of the great hazards of war. The chances are not unfavourable, but where we might have had a certainty we now have a hazard. We are leaving to the exertions of the British troops a problem which a few clear decisions of the Government, taken even since the formation of the Coalition, could have rendered infinitely less hard and costly.

After reviewing the misfortunes which had attended our undecided diplomacy in the Balkans, due largely to the interplay of the hesitations of two and latterly three other great Powers, the memorandum continued:—

Opportunity after opportunity, military and diplomatic, has been lost in the South-East of Europe. Risks have been run in the name of prudence before which hardihood itself would pale; yet so good are the cards, moral, military, and political, that we hold and have held through the war in this theatre, if only we choose to play them, that one great opportunity still remains. It is the last.

Time is very short, but we still have time and power to retrieve all previous mistakes:—

1. We ought now, without delay, to make all preparations to send the Third army[1] to Turkey as soon as possible. All transport arrangements ought to be made for that purpose,

[1] I. e., The Third New Army of 6 divisions.

preparations being begun now. If the battle goes in our favour we need not send them. Whether these troops, if sent, should be used on the Gallipoli Peninsula, on the Asiatic side, or in Thrace is a purely military question, which cannot, and need not, be settled until the result of the next battle is seen. We should then have at least 18 Divisions available for the capture of Constantinople.

2. We must get Bulgaria now. Bulgaria is strong, her army is ready, her people are wounded by the Russian defeats, her territorial claims are rightful and harmonise perfectly with the principle of nationality, which ought to guide us. The oppression of the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia by the Serbians is in itself a great wrong. The taking of Kavalla from Bulgaria by Greece after the second Balkan war was, as was recognised at the time, a most impolitic act. There is nothing in Bulgarian claims as now put forward which is not reasonable and honourable.

I proceeded to discuss the reactions which such a policy would produce in Serbia and in Greece, but this is scarcely suitable for publication. The memorandum concluded:—

The accession of Bulgaria would, of course, carry with it that of Roumania, and the union of all the Christian States of the Balkans against their natural enemies, Turkey and Austria, will be complete.

In order to gain this supreme advantage, the risk must be run that, having offered everything to Bulgaria, she will not move. In this case, as we are frequently warned, we shall have offended Serbia and Greece without gaining any compensating advantage. But, after all, we have offended them already by the offers made; once those offers are definitely rejected by Bulgaria the substantive cause of offence dies, and if other circumstances did not intervene we could, after an interval, address ourselves again to Greece.

But other circumstances will intervene in the Balkans unless we can gain Bulgaria to our cause or attack Constantinople before the end of September without her, and these other circumstances may be fatal to the issue of the war and disastrous in a peculiar degree to Great Britain.

To appreciate these circumstances, it is necessary to look

at the main military situation from the German point of view. I do not believe in the immediate resumption of a great German offensive in the west. As stated by me in writing on February 25, in reply to alarmist reports, and again in my memoranda circulated to the Cabinet on June 1 and 18, there is no likelihood of the Germans being able to transfer from the eastern to the western theatre during the next two months from 500,000 to 1,000,000 men for an offensive in the west, and even if they did so, it is the thing we ought to welcome most. During the last few weeks we have had repeated statements that a great offensive is going to begin in the western theatre, and, as on three or four previous occasions, when the same wrong arguments have been used with the same potent effect, nothing has followed. The Germans habitually spread false reports, and we are habitually deceived by them. As far back as February, the 29th Division was stopped sailing for three weeks for fear of a renewed German offensive in the west following on a Russian collapse. In the present case the announcement made in all the German newspapers that the foreign attachés had left for the western front was a blind of the most obvious kind. It is undoubtedly in the German's power, by the calculated indiscretions of officers and agents, to colour and confuse the whole of the intelligence information we receive through many sources.

In these circumstances it is the safest guide to consider what is the enemy's true interest. It is clear that his first interest is to press his advantage against Russia to the full to some point where the military situation of that country is definitely and fundamentally altered. How far he means to go against Russia we cannot measure, but that he should relax his pressure upon her in time to enable him to bring back his troops and begin a great offensive in the west within the next two months is impossible, and even in the next three months almost impossible. It is probable that he will not have done what he intends to do to Russia for at least two months,[1] and if fortune turns in favour of the Russians he may be entangled there for a much longer period.

But, on the assumption that in six weeks or two months

[1] Although I believed these periods would be much longer, I did not attempt to forecast beyond the three months which were under discussion.

from now 20 or 30 Divisions of German troops can be withdrawn from the Russian front, where would Germany be wise to send them? She might send them to Holland in case that country should turn against her later at an unfavourable moment. She might send them to Italy, where there are rich provinces to be conquered and to be held as security for a satisfactory peace. But, far more attractive to her and dangerous to us than all of these, she might break through Serbia, seduce Bulgaria, establish a through route to Constantinople, gain full control of the Turkish Empire with power to organise it for war on the Prussian model, and open to herself avenues to Persia and India. We must not suppose that Germany, encouraged by victory, will stop short on the path of conquest, or that the Napoleonic dreams of Eastern domination as an offset to England's colonial gains have no place in the minds of her military leaders. In these regions immense and easy prizes await the sword of the conqueror, and comparatively small armies could achieve the reduction of enormous territories. It is noteworthy in this connection that in spite of all pressure of this war upon Germany the construction of the Bagdad Railway has been hurried forward with German material at the greatest speed. The one thing it would not pay the Germans to do is to break themselves in sterile efforts to pierce the lines in France. Here they would encounter very numerous, well disciplined, and well supplied armies, far stronger proportionately than those they fought at the outset of the war, and here they have already pegged out for themselves a very large conquered area comprising the whole of Belgium and Antwerp and some of the best departments of France. Is it not their game to stand on what they have won and leave us, if we are foolish enough, to break our strength in trying to turn them out, while they gain further territories easily elsewhere?

These conclusions were soon to be sustained by the march of events.

* * * * *

At the end of the first week in July Lord Kitchener resolved to add the 53d and 54th Territorial Divisions to the reinforcements that were going to the Dardanelles, and I took

occasion to write a letter to Sir Ian Hamilton more encouraging in tone than my Cabinet memoranda.

Mr. Churchill to Sir Ian Hamilton.

I rejoice to say that on Monday (after 3 weeks' work) the War Council definitely decided to add two Territorial divisions to your army, making in all six divisions not yet engaged. I rejoice also at the punishment you are inflicting on the Turks, at the evident distress of their army and their capital, and at the progress made in gaining ground. My confidence in the future and in the wisdom of the policy which has launched this operation remains unshaken. Well done and with good luck, or mistakenly done and with bad luck, if done in the end, it will repay all losses and cover all miscalculations in the priceless advantages it will win for the Allied cause.

It has been a remarkable experience to me watching opinion slowly and steadily consolidating behind this enterprise, and to see the successive waves of opposition surmounted one after another. Ignorance, pessimism in high places, the malice of newspapers, the natural jealousies and carping of the Flanders army and of the French soldiers, have all failed to prevent the necessary reinforcements by land and sea from being sent. And now that you are equipped with all that you have asked for, and more, the next great effort can be made.

I never look beyond a battle. It is a culminating event, and like a brick-wall bars all further vision. But the chances seem favourable, and the reward of success will be astonishing.

Your daring spirit and the high qualities of your nature will enable you to enjoy trials and tests under which the fleshly average of commonplace commanders would quail. The superb conduct and achievements of the soldiers would redeem even a final failure; but with a final success they will become a military episode not inferior in glory to any that the history of war records. Then there will be proud honour for all who have never flinched and never wavered. God go with you.

I did not understand how far the actual performances of the War Office were to lag behind their paper programmes. The actual facts were far less satisfactory than I knew,

There is no principle of war better established than that everything should be massed for the battle. The lessons of military history, the practice of great commanders, the doctrines of the text books, have in every age enjoined this rule. We see Napoleon before his battles grasping for every man he can reach, neglecting no resource however small, cheerfully accepting risks at other points, content with nothing less than the absolute maximum which human power can command.

This high prudence cannot be discerned in Lord Kitchener's preparations at this time. He did not decide to add the 53d and 54th Divisions to the reinforcements that were going to the Dardanelles until it was impossible for the second of them to arrive before the battle had begun, thus having to go direct into action from a three weeks' voyage. The position of the troops in Egypt continued until the last moment undetermined. Including the Dardanelles details nearly 75,000 men were accumulated in Alexandria, Cairo and along the Canal. As long as we were threatening Constantinople there could be no danger of a serious Turkish invasion of Egypt. It should have been possible to organise from General Maxwell's troops at least 30,000 additional rifles as a reserve which could be thrown into the Gallipoli operations at the decisive moment and for a limited period. If General Maxwell had been ordered to organise such a force, and if Sir Ian Hamilton had been told that he could count it among the troops available for the battle, it would have been woven into the plans which were being prepared and would have sensibly improved the prospects. Lord Kitchener's treatment of the question was, however, most baffling. His telegraphic correspondence with Sir Ian Hamilton, which has been published, shows him at one moment counting large numbers of troops in Egypt as available if necessary for the Dardanelles, and at another chiding Sir Ian for attempting to draw on them. In consequence the British garrison of Egypt played no part in Sir Ian

Hamilton's calculations and plans, and was only thrown in, like so much else, too late.

When on the eve of the battle, July 29, Lord Kitchener telegraphed to Sir Ian Hamilton informing him that he had 'a total of about 205,000 men for the forthcoming operation,' the General replied: 'The grand total you mention does not take into account non-effectives or casualties; it includes reinforcements such as the 54th and part of the 53d Divisions, etc., which cannot be here in time for my operation, and it also includes Yeomanry and Indian troops which, until this morning, I was unaware were at my unreserved disposal. For the coming operation the number of rifles available is about half the figure you quote, viz., 120,000.' This figure was not effectively disputed by the War Office. Lord Kitchener had specifically included in his total of 205,000, 8,500 Yeomanry and 11,500 Indian troops and artillery stationed in Egypt. But when Sir Ian Hamilton attempted to draw on these, Lord Kitchener telegraphed:—

Maxwell wires that you are taking 300 officers and 5,000 men of his mounted troops. I do not quite understand why you require Egyptian Garrison troops while you have the 53rd Division at Alexandria, and the 54th, the last six battalions of which are arriving in five or six days, on the *Aquitania*.

When I placed the Egyptian Garrison at your disposal to reinforce at the Dardanelles in case of necessity, Maxwell pointed out that Egypt would be left very short, and I replied that you would only require them in case of emergency for a short time, and that the risk must be run. I did not contemplate, however, that you would take troops from the Egyptian Garrison until those sent specially for you were exhausted. How long will you require Maxwell's troops, and where do you intend to send them? They should only be removed from Egypt for actual operations and for the shortest possible time.

I was not able to discover the shortage of drafts, nor was I aware of the ambiguous conditions under which the garrison

of Egypt was available as a reserve. But a young Staff Officer from the Dardanelles, who reached London in July, disclosed to me the shortage of ammunition and suggested that consignments sent by rail to Marseilles instead of by sea might still reach the Army in time for the battle. I therefore urged Lord Kitchener to send the whole of the latest weekly outputs by this route. Usually most kind and patient with my importunity, he took this request very much amiss. I declared I would demand a Cabinet decision, and we parted abruptly. I spent the afternoon and evening marshalling opinion, and informed the Prime Minister of my intention to raise the issue. However, when the decks were cleared for action and I was invited to state my case, Lord Kitchener ended the matter by stating that he had now found it possible to issue the necessary orders. Three train loads of high-explosive shell went accordingly.

Upon such preludes the event was now to supervene.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BATTLE OF SUVLA BAY

The Threefold Plan—The Forces Available—The Helles Attack—Lone Pine—The Sortie from Anzac—The Landing at Suvla—The First Twenty-four Hours at Suvla—At Liman von Sanders's Headquarters—The Turkish Divisions from Bulair—An Anxious Interval—The Anzac Advance Resumed—The Struggle for the Crest Line—A Fatal Mischance—Sir Frederick Stopford at Suvla Bay—The Second Twenty-four Hours—Colonel Aspinall's Account—Arrival of the Commander-in-Chief—His Personal Intervention—Consequences—The Attacks on the 9th and 10th at Suvla—Mustapha Kemal's Counter-stroke at Anzac—Actions of the 15th and 21st—The True Causes of Failure.

THE long and varied annals of the British Army contain no more heart-breaking episode than the Battle of Suvla Bay. The greatness of the prize in view, the narrowness by which it was missed, the extremes of valiant skill and of incompetence, of effort and inertia, which were equally presented, the malevolent fortune which played about the field, are features not easily to be matched in our history. The tale has been often told, and no more than a general survey can here be attempted.[1]

Sir Ian Hamilton's plan had for its supreme object the capture of Hill 971 (Koja Chemen Tepe), the dominating point of the Sari Bair Ridge, and working from there, to grip the neck of the Peninsula from Gaba Tepe to Maidos. This conception was elaborated as follows:—

(1) To break out with a rush from Anzac and cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from land communication with Constantinople.

(2) To gain artillery positions which would cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from sea traffic whether with Constantinople or with Asia.

[1] See Map facing p. 474.

(3) To secure Suvla Bay as a winter base for Anzac and all the troops operating in that neighbourhood.

For this purpose three separate attacks were prepared in extreme detail by the Army Staff during the month of July: first, a holding attack by two of the six divisions at Helles to prevent the Turks from removing any troops from this sector of the front; secondly, a great attack from Anzac on the main and dominating ridge of Sari Bair by the two Australasian divisions, reinforced by the 13th New Army Division and one British and one Indian brigade; and thirdly, a landing by two divisions (the 10th and 11th) forming the IXth Corps at Suvla Bay to secure the Anafarta Ridge and join their right hands to the Anzac attack and help it as it progressed.

The Helles sector was held by 35,000 men under General Davies. To the Anzac attack were assigned 37,000 under General Birdwood; and to the Suvla attack, 25,000 under General Stopford; the whole aggregating, with a reserve on the islands or approaching on the sea of 20,000 to 25,000, about 120,000 fighting men.

The Turks believed that the British had received reinforcements amounting perhaps to 100,000 men, and they expected a general attack, together with a landing, early in August. They realised that the Sari Bair Ridge was the key to the Narrows; they were apprehensive of landings near Kum Tepe or near Bulair, and in addition they had to guard the Asiatic shore. They knew that Suvla and Ejelmer Bays were possible landing-places, but they did not regard landings there as sufficiently probable to warrant further dissipation of their strength. On the evening of August 6 their dispositions were as follows: at Helles, 40,000 rifles with 94 guns; opposite Anzac and between Anzac and Helles, 30,000 rifles, supported by 76 guns; at Bulair, 20,000 rifles and 80 guns; on the Asiatic coast, 20,000 rifles with about 60 guns. In all, including detachments of troops guarding the coast at various points, the Turks had been able to marshall 20 divisions, com-

prising about 120,000 rifles with 330 guns, and of these 90,000 to 100,000 men and 270 guns were actually on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

The forces on both sides available for the battle are thus seen to be approximately equal. The British did not possess any of the preponderance necessary for an offensive. Once their attack was fully disclosed and battle was joined along the whole front, there was no reasonable expectation of their being able to defeat the Turkish Army. There was, however, a chance of seizing vital positions by surprise before the Turks could bring up all their forces. The situation, in fact, exactly reproduces that of April 25, but on a larger scale. Once again the advantages of sea power have been neutralised by delay and the enemy given time to gather forces equal to our own; once again a frightful and dubious ordeal has taken the place of a sound and reasonably sure operation; once again the only hope lies in the devotion of the troops and the skill of their leaders; once again all is at the mercy of time and chance.

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On the afternoon of August 6 the great battle began with the attack of the Lancashire and Lowland Territorial Divisions on about 1,200 yards of the Turkish line at Helles. As it chanced, the Turks had just brought up two fresh divisions to this front. They were found in great strength, and their trench systems swarmed with men. Fierce fighting began at once and was maintained with increasing severity for a whole week. The conflict centred round a vineyard which was stormed at the outset by the British and held by them against repeated counter-attacks until the 12th, when it was recaptured by the enemy, who the next day were driven out by the British, with whom in the end it remained. It was not the only prize which had been purchased by costly valour. Of the seven Turkish divisions concentrated at the southern end of the Peninsula only one could be withdrawn to play its part in the real crisis of the battle.

Simultaneously with the British attack at Helles there began on the evening of the 6th an Australian attack on the Lone Pine Ridge to the right of the Anzac position. This attack was itself a subsidiary preliminary to the main Anzac operation. Its object was to deceive the enemy and draw him to the Anzac right, while all the time the decisive manœuvre was to proceed out on the Anzac left. Lone Pine Ridge and the fortifications surmounting it were stormed by the 1st Australian Brigade before sundown. The great beams which covered the Turkish trenches, converting them, in the absence of adequate howitzer attack, into completely protected galleries, were torn asunder by main force. The Australians plunged through the apertures and slew or captured the defenders of the galleries. The Turks immediately counter-attacked with the utmost fury and in large numbers. Intense and bloody fighting continued at this point throughout the night. It was renewed on the 7th and again on a great scale on the 9th, but every hostile effort to retake Lone Pine failed, and it rested to the end in the strong hands of the 1st Australian Brigade. Other attacks akin and supplemental to the assault of Lone Pine were delivered by the Australians against various fortified points in the centre of their line, particularly upon a redoubt called the Chessboard. In spite of every sacrifice no ground was gained, and the attacking parties were in some cases almost completely destroyed.

While the roar of the cannonade at Helles and at Lone Pine resounded through the Peninsula, the great sortie from Anzac had begun. Each night for a week beforehand powerful reinforcements of troops had secretly and skilfully been crowded into Anzac Cove and lay concealed in gulleys and dugouts, until on August 6 General Birdwood's force comprised 37,000 men and 72 guns. Now in the darkness of a moonless night 16,000 men in two main columns crept out from the left of the Anzac position, toiled silently a mile along the beach, then wheeled to their right and proceeded to attack

by three rugged, scrub-entangled, water-formed ravines which led up to the fateful summits of Sari Bair. The opening phase of this extraordinary enterprise involved the seizure of the fortified under-features to the left and right of the three ravines. The forces to whom these tasks had been assigned gained punctually and successfully both these strong points, and the main columns continued through the night to battle their way upward against darkness, boulders, scrub and the enemy's outposts. The hope of General Birdwood, of Sir Ian Hamilton, and of the staffs had been that dawn would see the heads of the Australian and British columns in possession of the decisive summits of Chunuk Bair and Koja Chemen Tepe. It would not have taken in daylight more than two hours to cover the distance unopposed. Six hours had been allowed under the actual conditions. But when dawn broke, the difficulties of the night and of the ground, and the stubborn and disconcerting resistance of the Turkish skirmishers, had prevented more than half the distance being covered. The troops were exhausted, and, after some vain efforts, it was determined to consolidate the position gained, to rest and reorganise the troops, and to renew the attack during the night of the 7th–8th.

Here was the cardinal fatality. Had it been possible to have leap-frogged the exhausted troops by a wave of fresh reinforcements, the whole crest of Sari Bair might well have fallen before noon into our possession. It had not been found possible to organise this in the face of the difficulties of the ground and of supplies, and meanwhile the direction and scale of the attack were now fully disclosed to the enemy.

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It is at this point that we must move on to Suvla Bay. The reader will remember the steel-plated motor-lighters which Lord Fisher had designed at the end of 1914 for the landing of troops upon hostile beaches. A number of these

had now been completed and sent to the Dardanelles. They were designed to carry five hundred infantry at a time at a speed of five knots, were bullet-proof and fitted with landing-bridges at their bows. Their appearance gained them throughout the Ægean the nickname of 'Beetles.' In thirteen of these Beetles, with numerous destroyers, lighters and transports, covered by a strong squadron of the Fleet, the 11th Division, followed by the 10th, had been moving through the blackest night towards Suvla Bay. Two hours before midnight the three brigades of the 11th Division reached the shore, the 34th Brigade landing at 'A' Beach inside Suvla Bay, the 32d and 33d Brigades at 'B' and 'C' Beaches south of Nibrunesi Point. In spite of the rifle fire of the Turkish outposts guarding the coast, of the grounding of some of the Beetles before they reached the shore, and the disconcerting effect from land mines which exploded near Beach 'A,' the whole three brigades disembarked successfully without much loss in two or three hours. Their immediate duty was to occupy the two small eminences, Hill 10 and Lala Baba, on each side of the dried-up Salt Lake, and to take possession of the high ground to the northward towards Kiretch Tepe Sirt. Thereafter as a second step a combined attack was to be made by the troops at Hill 10 and Lala Baba upon Chocolate Hill. If this was successful, the advance was to be continued against the rugged, scrub-covered and intricate under-feature known as Ismail Oglu Tepe. It was contemplated by the Staff that unless strong forces of the enemy were encountered, all these positions might well be in the hands of the troops by dawn. The event, however, turned very differently.[1]

It was 2 a.m. before the half battalion of Turks holding Lala Baba had been driven off and the hill occupied. Meanwhile the Brigadier commanding the 34th Brigade, having landed at Beach 'A,' perceived a sand-hill near the shore which he took to be Hill 10, and was content to occupy this

[1] All these positions can be followed on the map facing page 474.

until dawn. It was broad daylight before Hill 10 was taken and its surviving defenders retired slowly into the scrub of the plain. Thus the morning of the 7th saw only the first part of the task of the 11th Division accomplished, and as the light grew stronger Turkish artillery from unseen positions in the hills began fitfully to shell the various Beaches and the landed troops. Darkness exercises so baffling and mysterious an effect upon the movements even of the most experienced troops that the time-table of the Staff may well be deemed too ambitious. But the performance fell far short of reasonable expectation. The British Intelligence believed that five Turkish battalions, aggregating 4,000 men with artillery, were guarding this part of the coast. In fact, however, only three battalions, two of which were gendarmerie, aggregating about 1,800 men and 20 guns, stood in the path of the 11th Division.

The 10th Division, under General Hill, now approached the shore near Lala Baba and began to disembark from dawn onward under an occasional shell fire. By 8 a.m. thirteen battalions of the 11th Division, two mountain batteries and the covering ships were all in action, and the 10th Division was rapidly growing behind them. This force, rising as the day passed to 20,000 men, had only to advance three miles from their landing-places to brush before them what was left of the 1,800 Turks and occupy positions where water was plentiful and which were of decisive importance in this part of the field. Instead of doing this all the troops that had landed either remained idle near Lala Baba for many hours or toiled along the sandy shore around the Salt Lake, a march of five miles in the heat of the day, before attacking Chocolate Hill. Thirst and exhaustion afflicted these young soldiers, and the evening was far advanced before by a spirited attack they made themselves masters of Chocolate Hill. Night closed with the troops much wearied, with their units intermingled, their water supply in confusion, and with only their earliest objectives obtained. About a thousand casualties

had been sustained, and these were almost entirely confined to three or four battalions. Thus passed the first twenty-four hours at Suvla Bay.

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On the evening of August 6 the field telephones had carried the news of the beginning of the battle to General Liman von Sanders in his headquarters at Gallipoli, almost as soon as he heard the opening of the cannonade. Heavy British and Australian attacks were beginning at Helles and at Lone Pine, while at the same time British feints in the Gulf of Xeros and opposite Mitylene were reported as actual or prospective landings. Precious as were the moments, it was impossible to take any measures before the intention of the assailants was fully disclosed. But before midnight news was received that large masses of troops were moving out from the left of the Anzac position along the coast northward, and later, that numerous disembarkations were taking place at Suvla Bay. Two divisions in reserve at Maidos were ordered to reinforce the defenders of Sari Bair. These could certainly come into action during the next day. Suvla Bay, however, was an inevitable surprise against which it would not have been reasonable to prepare on a great scale beforehand. Who could measure the strength of the attack? A division, two divisions, an entire corps, two corps—no one could tell. But whatever might be the strength of the invaders there stood between them and the vital positions of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, the Anafarta Ridge and Ismail Oglu Tepe, only the German Major Willmer with one battalion of Gallipoli gendarmes, one of Brussa gendarmes and one of the 31st regiment with 20 guns. No help could come from the south; all was becoming locked in general battle there. Liman von Sanders, repeating his procedure of April 26, ordered the 7th and 12th Divisions to march at once from Bulair to Suvla Bay, and all the troops on the Asiatic side to cross to Gallipoli. Once again, Asia and the

vital Bulair lines must be left virtually unguarded, the easy spoil of any new disembarkation. 'For the second time,' says the German Commander, 'the upper part of the Gulf of Xeros was completely denuded of troops and on the entire Asiatic side only three battalions and a few batteries had been left behind for coast defence.' The 7th Turkish Division received orders to march at 3.40 a.m. and the 12th at 8.30 a.m. on August 7. Both divisions started from the neighbourhood of Bulair by the two roads running southward along the Peninsula. *The distance between them and Suvla Bay was more than thirty miles.*

It seemed to General von Sanders that no effective help could reach Major Willmer and his gendarmerie before the night of the 8th, and that no serious counter-attacks could be launched before the morning of the 9th. Daylight of the 7th revealed the extent of the British landings. The great Armada filled the Bay, its guns searched the hills, and swarms of troops were landing in successive waves upon the beach and gathering in the plain. Far away to the north the 7th and 12th Turkish Divisions, forming the XVIth Turkish Army Corps, had only just begun their march. However, during the afternoon Fezi Bey, the Turkish General commanding the Corps, reported, to Sanders's extreme surprise, that his two divisions had reached their destinations east of Anafarta, having covered a double march in the day. On this Sanders ordered a general attack at dawn on the 8th into the Anafarta Plain. Before daybreak on the 8th he mounted his horse and rode to the deployment area of this attack. He wandered about for some time looking vainly for his troops. He found at length a Staff Officer of the 7th Turkish Division, who reported that he was looking for an outpost position, that a large part of the 7th and 12th Divisions were still far behind, and that an attack that morning was out of the question. The Commander-in-Chief therefore ordered the attack to begin at sunset. He passed the day of the 8th in great anxiety, having still nothing

between him and the immense forces of the invader but the exhausted and much reduced gendarmerie. Four hundred men, the remains of the Brussa gendarmes and of the 2d/31st battalion, were at Ismail Oglu Tepe. Three hundred men, the remains of the Gallipoli gendarmes, were on Kiretch Tepe Sirt. There were no troops between these two points. Kavak and Tekke hills and all the low intervening ground was absolutely unoccupied. In these circumstances all the Turkish guns, except one, were withdrawn behind the Anafarta Ridge to avoid what seemed to be their otherwise inevitable capture. Towards evening General von Sanders learned from Major Willmer that the XVIth Turkish Corps had not yet arrived at its area of deployment. He summoned its commander to his presence and learned from him that the exhausted condition of the troops did not permit of any attack before the morning of the 9th. In his indignation at having been mocked by false hopes, he dismissed the General of the XVIth Corps and confided the vital fortunes of the whole of the Ottoman Empire to an officer of whom we have heard before—and since. 'That same evening,' he writes, 'I transferred the command of all the troops in the Anafarta sector to Mustapha Kemal Bey, formerly commanding the 19th Division.'

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We must now return to the Anzacs and Sari Bair. The whole of the 7th was spent by General Birdwood's troops in reorganising, resting and preparing for renewed battle at dawn. The line of Ghurkas, British and Anzacs lay across the mountain slopes having gained about two-thirds of the distance to their summits. But those summits were now guarded by three times the defenders of the night before.

The advance from Anzac was resumed before dawn on the 8th. The right and centre columns, starting from Rhododendron Spur, assaulted Chunuk Bair. The left column starting from the head of the most northerly of the three ravines

attacked Hill Q, a knoll upon the main ridge separated by a dip from Koja Chemen Tepe. This was a restriction of the original front of attack. An intense struggle now began and raged for three days without cessation. The right column of New Zealand troops soon after daybreak seized, conquered and held a substantial position on the south-western end of Chunuk Bair, and thus established themselves on the main ridge. The centre and left columns, unsupported by any help from Suvla Bay, were unable to make much progress. Night quenched for a while the bloody conflict. Meanwhile fresh Turkish troops continually reached the defence, and owing to the difficulties of water and ground no reinforcements could be employed in the attack.

The battle was renewed with undiminished fury on the 9th. The Anzac right maintained itself on Chunuk Bair; its left attacked Hill Q; its centre sought to join these two positions by occupying the saddle between them. These operations were preceded and sustained by an intense bombardment of every available gun of the Fleet and Army. The left attack, delayed by the darkness and the ground, was late in coming into action and failed to take Hill Q. But in spite of this the 6th Ghurkas and two companies of the 6th South Lancashires, belonging to the centre, striving upwards, gained command of vital positions on the saddle between Chunuk Bair and Hill Q. The heroic officer, Colonel Cecil Allanson, in command of the 6th Ghurkas, who led the assault, has recorded his experiences in the tragedy which followed.[1] He passed the night of the 8th–9th in the firing line.

> At an angle of about 35 degrees and about a hundred yards away were the Turks. . . . During the night a message came to me from the General Officer Commanding to try and get up on to 971 at 5.15 a.m., and that from 4.45 to 5.15 the Navy would bombard the top. I was to get all troops near me to co-operate. . . . As I could only get three companies of Brit-

[1] Written forty-eight hours after the event.

ish troops, I had to be satisfied with this. . . . I had only 15 minutes left; the roar of the artillery preparation was enormous; the hill, which was almost perpendicular, seemed to leap underneath one. I recognised that if we flew up the hill the moment it stopped, we ought to get to the top. I put the three companies into the trenches among my men, and said that the moment they saw me go forward carrying a red flag, every one was to start. I had my watch out, 5.15. I never saw such artillery preparation; the trenches were being torn to pieces; the accuracy was marvellous, as we were only just below. At 5.18 it had not stopped, and I wondered if my watch was wrong. 5.20 silence; I waited three minutes to be certain, great as the risk was. Then off we dashed, all hand in hand, a most perfect advance, and a wonderful sight. . . . At the top we met the Turks; Le Marchand was down, a bayonet through the heart. I got one through the leg, and then for about what appeared 10 minutes, we fought hand to hand, we bit and fisted, and used rifles and pistols as clubs; and then the Turks turned and fled, and I felt a very proud man; the key of the whole Peninsula was ours, and our losses had not been so very great for such a result. Below I saw the Straits, motors and wheeled transport, on the roads leading to Achi Baba. As I looked round I saw we were not being supported, and thought I could help best by going after those [Turks] who had retreated in front of us. We dashed down towards Maidos, but had only got about 100 feet down when suddenly our own Navy put six 12-in. monitor shells into us, and all was terrible confusion.[1] It was a deplorable disaster; we were obviously mistaken for Turks, and we had to get back. It was an appalling sight: the first hit a Ghurka in the face; the place was a mass of blood and limbs and screams, and we all flew back to the summit and to our old position just below.[2] I remained on the crest with about 15 men; it was a wonderful view; below were the Straits, reinforcements coming over from the Asia Minor side, motor-cars flying. We commanded Kilid Bahr, and the rear of Achi Baba and the communications to all their Army there. . . . I was now left alone much crippled by the pain of my wound, which was stiffening, and

[1] The size of these shells and who fired them has never been established.

[2] 150 men are said to have been killed by these shells.

loss of blood. I saw the advance at Suvla Bay had failed, though I could not detect more than one or two thousand against them, but I saw large Turkish reinforcements being pushed in that direction. My telephone lines were smashed. . . . I now dropped down into the trenches of the night before, and after getting my wound bound up, proceeded to try and find where all the regiment was; I got them all back in due course, and awaited support before moving up the hill again. Alas! it was never to come, and we were told to hold our position throughout the night of the 9th–10th. During the afternoon we were counter-attacked by large bodies of Turks five times between 5 and 7 p.m., but they never got to within 15 yards of our line. . . . Captain Tomes and Le Marchand are buried on the highest summit of the Chunuk Bair. . . . I was ordered back to make a report. I was very weak and faint. . . . I reported to the General, and told him that unless strong reinforcements were pushed up, and food and water could be sent us, we must come back, but that if we did we gave up the key of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The General then told me that nearly everywhere else the attack had failed, and the regiment would be withdrawn to the lower hills early next morning.

The morning of the 10th dawned on these vain prodigies of devotion. Twelve thousand men, at least half of those actually involved in the severity of the fighting, had fallen, and the terrible summits flamed unconquered as ever. Nevertheless the Anzac right held with relieved troops their important gain on the Chunuk Bair, and against this the Turkish reserves were darkly gathering.

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We have seen how General Liman von Sanders spent May 8, awaiting with impatience in the hills behind Anafarta the arrival of reinforcements from Bulair. What meanwhile was happening at Suvla Bay? Our military annals, old and new, are not so lacking in achievement, that one need shrink from faithful record.

Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stopford, Commander of the 9th Corps, had arrived with his staff in the sloop *Jonquil* at daylight on the 7th. He had remained on the *Jonquil* on account of the facilities of wireless and signal communication. During the afternoon of the 8th he had paid a visit to the shore. General Stopford was an agreeable and cultivated gentleman who fifteen years before had served in the South African War as Military Secretary to Sir Redvers Buller. After commanding the London District, he had left the Army in 1909, and had lived until the outbreak of the great struggle in a retirement unhappily marked by much ill-health. From this seclusion he had been drawn, like many others, by the enormous expansion of our land forces. He had been entrusted by Lord Kitchener with the task of training an Army Corps in England, and he now found himself for the first time in his life in a position of high and direct responsibility and in actual command of troops in the presence of the enemy. In these circumstances we are certainly entitled to assume that he did his best.

The natural disquietudes with which he had contemplated the nocturnal landing on a hostile shore were no sooner relieved by success, than another set of serious considerations presented themselves. The enemy might be more numerous than the Staff believed; they might have more trenches than the aeroplane reconnaissance had reported. Moreover they might at any time resume the desultory shelling of the Beaches which had died away on the evening of the 7th. In this situation the measures which he considered most necessary were the reorganisation of the troops who had landed, the improvement of their supplies particularly in regard to water, the digging of trenches to secure the ground they had gained, and the landing of as much artillery as possible to support their further advance. In these occupations August 8, the second twenty-four hours since the landing, passed peacefully away, while his Chief-of-Staff, General Reed, who shared his Chief's outlook to the full, prepared the orders and arrangements for an

advance at daybreak on the 9th. 'The second day of the IXth Corps' stay at Suvla,' writes General Callwell, at this time Director of Operations at the War Office, 'was, from the fighting point of view, practically a day of rest.'[1] We may pause to survey the scene on both sides of the front this sunny August afternoon. On the one hand the placid, prudent, elderly English gentleman with his 20,000 men spread around the beaches, the front lines sitting on the tops of shallow trenches, smoking and cooking, with here and there an occasional rifle shot, others bathing by hundreds in the bright blue bay where, disturbed hardly by a single shell, floated the great ships of war: on the other, the skilful German stamping with impatience for the arrival of his divisions, expecting with every hour to see his scanty covering forces brushed aside, while the furious Kemal animated his fanatic soldiers and hurled them forward towards the battle.

* * * * *

Sir Ian Hamilton's General Staff Officer for Operations, Colonel Aspinall, had been ordered to report on the Suvla situation for the Commander-in-Chief. He arrived on the morning of the 8th. Here is his account :—[2]

On our arrival in Suvla Bay we at once gathered from the appearance of the place that the operation had been a complete success. The whole Bay was at peace. The large stretch of water was crowded with transports and supply ships unloading their stores without any interference by the enemy. There was no sound of firing on the shore; and all round the Bay were clusters of naked men bathing in the sea.

I at once went ashore on the southern side of the Bay to try and find Corps Headquarters, but could obtain no information as to their locality. On the Beach at which I landed hundreds of men were sitting resting under the cliffs, and I particularly noticed that an abundance of fresh water was

[1] The Dardanelles campaign, p. 229.

[2] Colonel Aspinall has placed this statement at my disposal.

trickling down the face of these cliffs from the grassy slopes above.

Finding no one in authority, I pushed inland. There was still no sound of firing, and I felt more confident than ever that we must have reached the hills on the Eastern side of the Suvla Plain. Shortly afterwards, however, I met the Chief of the Royal Engineers of the 11th Division. To my astonishment this officer informed me that our front line was only a very short way inland and that there were no signs of a fresh advance being ordered. The Corps Commander, he stated, was not ashore but still had his headquarters on board 'H.M.S. *Jonquil*.'

Shortly afterwards I came across Major General Hammersley, commanding the 11th Division. General Hammersley informed me that he had no orders to advance until next morning and that he did not think it would be possible until more guns had been landed.

I then returned to the shore en route to Corps Headquarters. During the whole of this time, with the exception of a few rounds in the neighbourhood of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, I had heard no firing of any kind.

On arrival at the Beach the Commander of the 11th Division Artillery came up to me and asked whether I came from General Headquarters. On my reply in the affirmative he begged me to do everything in my power to 'get a move on.' He was convinced that it was essential to press on at once, but nothing was being done and apparently nothing was going to be done.

I then proceeded on board 'H.M.S. *Jonquil*.' General Stopford greeted me by 'Well Aspinall, the men have done splendidly and have been magnificent.' 'But they haven't reached the hills, Sir,' I replied. 'No,' he answered, 'but they are ashore!' I replied that I was sure the Commander-in-Chief would be disappointed that they had not yet reached the high ground covering the Bay, in accordance with the orders, and I impressed upon him the urgent importance of moving forward at the earliest possible moment, before the enemy's reinforcements forestalled him on the hills. General Stopford replied that he quite realised the importance of losing no time, but that it was impossible to advance until the men had rested. He intended to make a fresh advance on the following day.

I then went on board the Admiral's flagship and sent the following telegram to General Headquarters:—

'Just been ashore where I found all quiet. No rifle fire, no artillery fire, and apparently no Turks. IX Corps resting. Feel confident that golden opportunities are being lost and look upon situation as serious.'

Shortly after sending this message I heard that the Commander-in-Chief was already on his way to Suvla, and a few minutes later he came in to harbour on the Admiral's yacht.

* * * * *

The harmony of Suvla Bay was marred late in the afternoon by the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Ian Hamilton had been persuaded by his Staff that his proper place during this great triple battle was in his regular headquarters at Imbros. Here then he remained during the whole of the 7th and the morning of the 8th, digesting such information as the telegrams from the various sectors of the front contained. But at 11.30 on the morning of the 8th he became so disquieted with the want of news from Suvla that he could bear his isolation no longer, and determined to go there at once. A destroyer, the *Arno*, had been specially placed at his disposal by the Navy for the period of the operations, and to the *Arno* accordingly signals for instant departure were made. It then appeared that the local Rear-Admiral had for reasons connected with the condition of the boilers, ordered the fires to be drawn from this vessel, and that she could not move for six or seven hours. Finding himself thus, in his own words, 'marooned' the Commander-in-Chief became both distressed and indignant. His complaints induced the local Rear-Admiral to offer him a passage on the yacht *Triad*, which was leaving for Suvla at 4.15 p.m. On this accordingly the General embarked and reached Suvla Bay about 6 o'clock. Here he found the *Chatham* with Admiral de Robeck and Commodore Keyes on board. They expressed to him their profound uneasiness at

the paralysis which seemed to have seized upon the troops. On the top of this came Colonel Aspinall. On hearing his report the Commander-in-Chief boarded the *Jonquil*, where he found General Stopford, tired from his walk on the shore, but otherwise happy. General Stopford said that 'everything was quite all right and going well.' He proceeded to explain that the men had been very tired, that he had not been able to get water up to them or land his guns as quickly as he hoped; he had therefore decided to postpone the occupation of the high ground which 'might lead to a regular battle' until next morning; that meanwhile the Brigadiers had been told to gain what ground they could without serious fighting, but that actually they had not occupied any dominating tactical point.

The Commander-in-Chief did not accept this result. He knew that reinforcements were marching southward from Bulair. He believed that the Anafarta Ridge was still unoccupied by any appreciable enemy force. He apprehended, and rightly, that what might be gained on the evening of the 8th without fighting, would involve a bloody struggle in the dawn. He urged an immediate advance on Ismail Oglu and Tekke hills. General Stopford raised a number of objections, and the Commander-in-Chief determined to visit the Divisional Headquarters on shore and see for himself. General Stopford did not accompany him.

General Hammersley, the Divisional Commander, was not able to give a very clear account of the situation, and after a considerable discussion the Commander-in-Chief determined personally to intervene. General Hammersley had told him that the 32d Brigade was available in the neighbourhood of Sulajik and was capable of moving forward. Sir Ian Hamilton thereupon told the Divisional Commander 'in the most distinct terms that he wished this Brigade to advance and dig themselves in on the crest line.' General Hammersley apparently concurred in this, and afterwards claimed that he had acted on his own responsibility, not as the result of a direct order,

but of the expression of a wish personally made by the Commander-in-Chief. Accordingly after Sir Ian Hamilton had returned to the *Triad*, General Hammersley directed the 32d Brigade to concentrate and endeavour to gain a foothold on the high ground north of Kuchuk Anafarta. He specially mentioned the 6th East Yorkshire Battalion as one that should be recalled from its existing position and concentrated. On these decisions darkness fell.

The 32d Brigade was not, however, disposed as its Divisional Commander imagined. On the contrary, with praiseworthy initiative two battalions had pushed forward far in advance of the rest of the 9th Corps, and finding no opposition, one had occupied a good position near Abrikja, and the other was actually entrenching itself on Scimitar Hill. It is extraordinary that on such a quiet day this should not have been known at the Divisional Headquarters less than two miles away. Both these battalions were recalled from the positions which they had gained and were concentrated for the advance to Kuchuk Anafarta. These movements deranged the general plan of attack which was fixed for dawn; they involved the evacuation of the valuable position of Scimitar Hill, never afterwards, in spite of all efforts, to be regained. Nor in the end was it possible for the 32d Brigade to make its attack until daybreak.

At dawn on the morning of the 9th the British advance from Suvla was at last resumed. The attack was delivered by the 11th Division, the 31st Brigade of the 10th Division, and by some battalions of the 53d Territorial Division which had been newly landed, and was directed against the high ground from Kuchuk Anafarta on the left to Ismail Oglu Hill. Simultaneously, however, the counter-attack ordered by Liman von Sanders also began. The leading reinforcements from the 7th and 12th Turkish Divisions had arrived overnight, and the enemy was perhaps three times as strong as on the previous day and constantly increasing. No sooner had the 6th East

Yorkshire Battalion been withdrawn from Scimitar Hill than the Turks had reoccupied it. It was necessary that this hill should be taken before an effective advance could be made on its right against Ismail Oglu Hill. The 31st Brigade of the 10th Division therefore assaulted Scimitar Hill, but was unable to recapture it, and the whole of the right of the attack was prejudiced in consequence of the failure to regain this feature. The 32d Brigade on the left of the line likewise failed to reach its goal, and in parts of the front the troops were driven back in disorder by the ardour with which the Turkish newcomers threw themselves into the fight.

The rest of the 53d Division were landed during the 9th, and the battle was renewed on the morning of the 10th and maintained all day. Both Scimitar and Ismail Oglu Hills were partially captured, but were lost again under the pressure of violent counter-attacks. When night fell over the battle-field, lurid with the fiercely burning scrub, the IXth Corps occupied positions very little more advanced than those which it had gained on the first day of its landing, and ample Turkish forces stood entrenched and victorious upon all the decisive positions. The losses had not exceeded a thousand on the 7th, but nearly 8,000 officers and men were killed or wounded at Suvla Bay on the 9th and 10th.

* * * * *

The closing event of the battle has now to be recorded. When daylight broke on the morning of the 10th the British from Anzac still held their hard-won positions on Chunuk Bair. Two battalions of the 13th Division—the 6th North Lancashires and the 5th Wiltshires—had relieved the worn-out troops who had stormed the hill. They had barely settled down in their new position when they were exposed to a tremendous attack. After his successful action at Suvla Bay on the 9th, Mustapha Kemal passed the night in preparing a supreme effort to regain this priceless ridge. The whole of

the Turkish 8th Division brought from the Asiatic shore with three additional battalions and aided by a powerful and converging artillery were led forward to the assault by Mustapha Kemal in person. The thousand British rifles—all for whom room could be found on the narrow summit—were engulfed and overwhelmed in this fierce flood. Very few of the Lancashire men escaped, and the Wiltshire battalion was literally annihilated. Flushed with victory the Turks pressed over the summit and poured down the steep face of the mountain in dense waves of men intent on driving the invaders into the sea. But here they encountered directly the whole blast of fire from the Fleet and from every gun and machine gun in the Anzac-British line. Under this storm the advancing Turkish masses were effectually crushed. Of three or four thousand men who descended the seaward slopes of the hill, only a few hundred regained the crest. But there they stayed—and stayed till the end of the story. Thus by the 10th the whole of the second great effort to win the Straits had ended at all points without decisive gains.

Two serious actions had still to be fought before the failure was accepted as final. The 54th Territorial Division had now landed at Suvla, and with its support on the 15th and 16th two brigades of the 10th Irish Division attacked along the high Kiretch Tepe Sirt Ridge which bounds Suvla Bay on the north. Well supported by fire from the sea, these troops under General Mahon at first made good progress. But in the end they were compelled by counter-attacks and bombing to give up most of the ground they had gained. This action does not bulk very largely in British accounts, and its critical character seems scarcely to have been appreciated. Liman von Sanders says of it:—

> If during their attacks on August 15 and 16 the British had captured and held the Kiretch Tepe, the whole position of the 5th Army would have been outflanked. The British might have then achieved a decisive and final victory. The

MAP IV.

From "Gallipoli Diary," by General Sir Ian Hamilton. By permission of the author and the publishers, Edward Arnold & Co.

ridge of Kiretch Tepe and its southern slopes command from the north the wide plain of Anafarta. From its eastern slope the offensive could have been easily continued with decisive results along and covered by the big depression which leads to Akbash and thence right across the Peninsula. . . . There can be no doubt that in view of the great British superiority a complete success had been possible for them.

A further effort was made on August 21, directed this time to the capture of Ismail Oglu Hill. For this purpose the 29th Division was brought from Helles and the dismounted Yeomanry Division from Egypt to reinforce the 10th, 11th, 53d and 54th Divisions now all landed at Suvla Bay. Strong forces of the Anzac left under General Cox also co-operated. But the Turks were now perfectly fortified and in great strength. Less than sixty guns, only sixteen of which were even of medium calibre, were available to support the attack, and for these the supply of ammunition was exiguous. The battle was fiercely fought in burning scrub and a sudden and unusual mist hampered the attacking artillery, and though the Anzac left gained and held some valuable ground, no general results were achieved. 'The attacks,' said Liman von Sanders, 'were repulsed by the Turks after heavy loss and after putting in the last reserve, including the cavalry.' The British losses, particularly of the Yeomanry and the 29th Division who assaulted with the utmost determination, were heavy and fruitless. On this dark battlefield of fog and flame Brigadier-General Lord Longford, Brigadier-General Kenna, V.C., Colonel Sir John Milbanke, V.C., and other paladins fell. This was the largest action fought upon the Peninsula, and it was destined to be the last. Since the new offensive had begun the British losses had exceeded 45,000, while those of the Turks were not less than 40,000. Already on the 16th Sir Ian Hamilton had telegraphed to Lord Kitchener stating that 50,000 additional rifles and drafts of 45,000 were required to enable offensive operations to be continued. These reinforcements,

for reasons which the next chapter will explain, the British Government found themselves unable to supply, and a complete deadlock supervened along the fronts of both battered and exhausted armies.

At every phase in the battle, down even to the last action on the 21st, the issue between victory and defeat hung trembling in the balance. The slightest change in the fell sequence of events would have been sufficient to turn the scale. But for the forty-eight precious hours lost by the IXth Corps at Suvla, positions must have been won from which decisive operations were possible. 'We all felt,' wrote Sanders, 'that the British leaders at the successive landings which began on August 6 stayed too long on the beach instead of pushing forward inland at all costs from each landing-place.' Had the experienced 29th Division been employed at this point, had the Yeomanry from Egypt been made available from the beginning, success could hardly have been denied. When it was too late leaders of the highest quality—Byng, Fanshawe, Maude—were sent from France to replace those whose inertia or incapacity had produced such grievous results. These new Generals could be spared on the morrow of disaster, but not while their presence might have commanded success.

Criticism severe and searching has been applied to many aspects of the Battle of Suvla Bay, but history will pronounce that it was not upon the Gallipoli Peninsula that it was lost. It is rarely that Opportunity returns. Yet in spite of the errors and misfortunes of the original operations, she had offered herself once more to our hand. But the golden moment was not in August. It was at the end of June or the beginning of July. And that moment was needlessly thrown away. 'After the failure of the attacks which followed the first landing,' say the Dardanelles Commissioners (Conclusion 5), 'there was undue delay in deciding upon the course to be pursued in the future. Sir Ian Hamilton's appreciation was forwarded on May 17. It was not considered by the War

Council or the Cabinet until June 7. The reconstruction of the Government which took place at this most critical period was the main cause of the delay. As a consequence the despatch of the reinforcements asked for by Sir Ian Hamilton in his appreciation was postponed for six weeks.' This delay and the neglect to utilise the surplus forces in Egypt robbed us of the numerical superiority which it was in our power to command and which was essential to a victorious offensive. Had a reasonable action been taken even from May 17 onward, as will be seen from the table on the next page, 15 allied divisions aggregating 150,000 rifles, could have attacked 10 Turkish divisions aggregating 70,000 to 75,000 rifles in the second week of July. Instead the mistakes which were committed in Downing Street and Whitehall condemned us gratuitously to a battle of equal numbers in August and to a hazard of the most critical kind, and from that hazard we emerged unsuccessful. The errors and miscarriages which took place upon the battlefield cannot be concealed, but they stand on a lower plane than these sovereign and irretrievable misdirections.

We may now set forth the cause of defeat in the cruel clarity of tabular statement.[1]

[1] See page 478.

THE RELATIVE STRENGTHS

Date.		Turkish Divisions:	Turkish Rifles:	Actual British and French Divisions:	Actual British and French Rifles:	Available[1] British and French Divisions:	Available[1] British and French Rifles.
Feb. 18 (Opening of the Naval Attack)	(uncertain weather)	nil	5,000	nil	2,000	4	36,000
Mar. 20 (End of the Naval Attack)	(uncertain weather)	2	14,000	4	40,000 (but without the 29th Division)	5	60,000
April 25 (The first Military Attack)		6	42,000	5	50,000	5	60,000
July 7 (Earliest date for the second Military Attack)		10	70,000–75,000	8	52,000	14	150,000[2]
August 7 (The Battle of Suvla Bay).		20[4]	120,000	14	120,000	14	120,000[3]

The three favourable occasions are shown in squares. It needed only a stroke of the pen in Whitehall to have produced any of them.

[1] 'Available' means ready, doing nothing, capable of being sent so as to be on the spot on the date mentioned, and actually sent within a month of that date.

[2] British { From home: 29th, 42d, 52d, 10th, 11th, 13th, 53d, 54th and Royal Naval Divisions 9
From Egypt: Yeomanry Division, Indian Division, and various details 2
Australasian: The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps 2
The French Corps (1 Division with additional Units) 1
Total 14

[3] The reduction from the July figures is accounted for by a month's net wastage among the divisions already on the Peninsula.

[4] The following are the Turkish Divisions on the spot: 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 20th, 26th and 27th.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RUIN OF THE BALKANS[1]

Jealousies of the Balkan States—Their Common Interest—The Rewards of Combination—Baffling Policy of the Great Allies—Universal Misfortune—The Russian Defeats—Waiting on the Dardanelles—Serbian Obstinacy—Cumbrous and Tardy Allied Diplomacy—Consequences of the Battle of Suvla Bay—A New Tremendous Event—Lord Kitchener Returns from France—Decision for a Great Offensive in France—My Protest and Warning—The Dardanelles Army Left to Languish—An Extraordinary Incident—General Sarrail's Plan—General Joffre's Promise—My Memorandum of September 21—The Stokes Gun—Bulgaria Begins to Move—The Battles of Loos and Champagne—Their Sequel—Bulgaria Mobilises—Mackensen at Temesvar—Repercussion on Greece—Her Treaty of Alliance—The Salonika Project—King Constantine Dismisses Monsieur Venizelos—The Only Remedy—The Advice of the Experts—The Cabinet Compromise—The French Decision—Salonika: General Joffre's Threat—The Final Offer of the British Government—The Storm Bursts on Serbia.

THE Christian States of the Balkans were the children of oppression and revolt. For four hundred years they had dwelt under the yoke of the Turkish conqueror. They had recovered their freedom after cruel struggles only during the last hundred years. Their national characteristics were marked by these hard experiences. Their constitutions and dynasties resulted from them. Their populations were poor, fierce and proud. Their governments were divided from one another by irreconcilable ambitions and jealousies. Every one of them at some ancient period in its history had been the head of a considerable Empire in these regions, and though Serbian and Bulgarian splendours had been of brief duration compared to the glories of Greece, each looked back to this period of greatness as marking the measure of its historic

[1] See general map of the Balkan Peninsula facing page 504.

rights. All therefore simultaneously considered themselves entitled to the ownership of territories which they had in bygone centuries possessed only in succession. All therefore were plunged in convulsive quarrels and intrigues.

It is to this cause that their indescribable sufferings have been mainly and primarily due. It was not easy for all or any of these small States to lift themselves out of this dismal and dangerous quagmire or find a firm foothold on which to stand. Behind the national communities, themselves acting and reacting upon each other in confusion, there were in each country party and political divisions and feuds sufficient to shake a powerful Empire. Every Balkan statesman had to thread his way to power in his own country through complications, dangers and surprising transformations, more violent, more intense than those which the domestic affairs of great nations reveal. He arrived hampered by his past and pursued by foes and jealousies, and, thus harassed and weakened, had to cope with the ever-shifting combinations of Balkan politics, as these in turn were influenced by the immense convulsions of the Great War.

In addition to all this came the policy of the three great allied Powers. France and Russia had each its own interests and outlook, its favourite Balkan State and its favourite party in each State. Great Britain had a vague desire to see them all united, and a lofty impartiality and detachment scarcely less baffling. To this were super-added the distracting influences of the various Sovereigns and their Teutonic origins or relations. In consequence, the situation was so chaotic and unstable, there were so many vehement points of view rising and falling, that British, French and Russian statesmen never succeeded in devising any firm, comprehensive policy. On the contrary, by their isolated, half-hearted and often contradictory interventions, they contributed that culminating element of disorder which led every one of these small States successively to the most hideous forms of ruin.

Yet all the time the main interests of the three great Allies and of the four Balkan kingdoms were identical, and all could have been protected and advanced by a single and simple policy. The ambitions of every one of the Balkan States could have been satisfied at the expense of the Turkish and Austrian Empires. There was enough for all, and more than enough. The interest of the three great Allies was to range the Balkan States against these Empires. United among themselves, the Balkan States were safe: joined to the three Allies, they could not fail to gain the territories they coveted. The addition of the united Balkan States to the forces of the Entente must have involved the downfall of Austria and Turkey and the speedy, victorious termination of the war. For every one there was a definite prize. For Roumania, Transylvania; for Serbia—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Dalmatia and the Banat of Temesvar; for Bulgaria, Adrianople and the Enos-Midia line; for Greece, Smyrna and its hinterland; and for all, safety, wealth and power.

To realise these advantages, certain concessions had to be made by the Balkan States among themselves. Roumania could restore the Dobrudja to Bulgaria; Serbia could liberate the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia; Greece could give Kavalla as a makeweight; and as an immediate solatium to Greece, there was Cyprus which could have been thrown into the scale. As the final levers, there were the financial resources of Great Britain and whatever military and naval forces the Entente might decide to employ in this theatre.

It is astonishing that when all interests were the same, when so many powerful means of leverage and stimulus were at hand, everything should without exception have gone amiss. If in February, 1915, or possibly after the Turkish declaration of war in November, 1914, the British, French and Russian Governments could have agreed upon a common policy in the Balkans—and had sent plenipotentiaries of the highest order to the Balkan Peninsula to negotiate on a clear, firm basis

with each and all of these States—a uniform, coherent action could have been devised and enforced with measureless benefits to all concerned. Instead, the situation was dealt with by partial expedients suggested by the rapid and baffling procession of events. Everything was vainly offered or done by the Allies successively and tardily, which done all at once and in good time would have achieved the result.

The Balkan States offered by far the greatest possibility open to allied diplomacy at the beginning of 1915. This was never envisaged and planned as if it were the great battle which indeed it was. Fitful, sporadic, half-hearted, changeable, unrelated expedients were all that the statesmen of Russia, France and Britain were able to employ. Nor is it right for public opinion in these countries to condemn the Balkan States and Balkan politicians or sovereigns, too sweepingly. The hesitations of the King of Roumania, the craft of King Ferdinand, the shifts and evasions of King Constantine all arose from the baffling nature of the Balkan problem and the lack of policy of the Allies. Serbia, indeed, fought on desperately and blindly without consideration for any other interests but her own and with frightful consequences to herself, ultimately repaired only by the final victory. Roumania was throughout in peril of her life and perplexed to the foundations of her being. When at last, after infinite hesitations, bargainings and precautions, she entered the war, she was too late to decide or abridge the struggle but in good time to be torn in pieces. Bulgaria turned traitor alike to her past and to her future, and after many exertions was plunged in the woe of the vanquished. Greece, rescued in the nick of time by courage and genius, and emerging with little cost upon the side of the victors, survived incorrigible to squander all that she had gained. Yet in Roumania there was Také Jonesco always pointing clear and true; in Bulgaria, Stambulisky, braving the wrath of King Ferdinand and marching proudly to his long prison with the names of England and Russia on his

lips; and in Greece, Venizelos, threading his way through indescribable embarrassments and triumphing over unimaginable difficulties, preserved his country for a time in spite of herself and might well have limited the miseries of Europe.

* * * * *

August, 1915, saw the culmination of the Russian disasters. By the end of June the German-Austrian offensive had driven the Russians out of nearly all the southern half of their huge Galician-Polish salient. This had been reduced to a semicircle 170 miles across, with Brest Litovsk at its centre and Warsaw almost on its outer circumference. Lemberg had been lost. Mackensen's front was now faced almost north and ahead of him lay the four railway lines which fed the salient. On July 13 he commenced, with a German and two Austrian Armies, an advance against the southernmost railway [the Kowel-Cholm-Lublin-Ivangorod line], with Field-Marshal Woyrsch on his left pressing eastward. By August 1 he was across the railway in the centre at Cholm and Lublin, and four days later Ivangorod and Warsaw were evacuated by the Russians. Novo-Georgievsk, where some eighty-five thousand second-class troops had been collected, made a show of defence, but capitulated on the 20th. But this was not the end of the disasters. In the north, in Lithuania, the German Eighth and Tenth Armies under Hindenburg, reinforced by German troops from the south where the line had been shortened, moved forward, and on August 10 had taken Kovno. All the Russian troops between Kovno and Riga were thus in danger of envelopment and fell back. Even Brest Litovsk, the long-vaunted model fortress, did not hold out long. Invested on August 11 on three sides, it was abandoned on the 26th after the forts on the southwest front had been stormed. Thus the last semblance of the great Salient had disappeared, and the Russian front, except for a forward bend covering Riga, had approximated to a north and south line. The Rus-

sians had evaded envelopment and capture, but all their gains in Galicia had gone, they had lost Poland, 325,000 prisoners and more than three thousand guns, besides rifles and equipment which it was impossible to replace. Worse than all, the Tsar was induced to remove the Grand Duke Nicholas from his command and send him to the Caucasus.

The Russian defeats from April onward had reacted most unfortunately against Italy. In 1914 Austria could spare no more than local corps to watch the Italian frontier. By the date of the Italian declaration of war she had managed to collect 122 battalions, 10 squadrons and 216 guns against Italy, disposed in mixed groups behind carefully constructed entrenchments. But henceforward there was a constant flow of reinforcements from the Galician theatre. The Italian offensive towards Trieste, known as the first and second battles of the Isonzo, in June and July carried the Italians 6 miles into enemy territory, and thereafter left them as firmly rooted in trench warfare as the Armies on the Western front. The Italian operations in the Tyrol led to no more than the occupation of five small separate salients of Austrian territory. Thus to the Russian disasters, was added the Italian deadlock: and both exercised a fatal influence upon the Bulgarian mind.

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Nevertheless all eyes in the Balkans were riveted on the Gallipoli Peninsula until the result of the Battle of Suvla Bay became known. Till it was lost the Bulgarians held their hand, and in the month of July there were still hopeful possibilities of bringing them in on the side of the Allies. The Austro-German attack upon Serbia which had seemed so imminent in February had not matured during all the months of the summer. The deep anxieties with which some members of the Cabinet viewed this great danger were happily not borne out as the months slipped away. I know of no cause for the delay of this attack other than the influence exercised

upon the Balkan States and upon Bulgaria by the operations at the Dardanelles, and the belief so widely held throughout the Balkan States that England would never relinquish such an effort without achieving success. The continued fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the knowledge that large reinforcements were pouring out, and that another great trial of strength in that theatre was impending, dominated the action of Bulgaria; and the action of Bulgaria was the fact which in turn governed the Austro-German attack on Serbia.

I was, as has been shown, strongly of opinion during the month of July that we ought not to stake the whole Balkan policy solely on the result of a battle in Gallipoli, but that, while doing everything in our power to secure a victory there, we should also strive to win Bulgaria. This could be done only by territorial concessions forced upon Greece and Serbia, combined with the granting of loans and the expectation of success in the Dardanelles. The imminent peril in which Serbia stood, and the restricted conditions under which the Allies could afford her protection, made it indispensable that she should cede, and if necessary be made to surrender, the uncontested zone in Macedonia to the Bulgarians, to whom it belonged by race, by history, by treaty, and—until it was taken from them in the second Balkan War—by conquest. Serbia, even when at the last gasp during the first Austrian attack upon her in 1914, had found it necessary to keep large numbers of troops in the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia to hold down the native population. Right and reason, the claims of justice, and the most imperious calls of necessity, alike counselled the Serbians to surrender at least the uncontested zone. To the ordinary exhortations of diplomacy were added special appeals by the Sovereigns and the Rulers of the allied countries. The Prince Regent of Serbia was besought by the Tsar, by the President of the French Republic, and by King George V, to make a concession right in itself, necessary in the common cause, vital to the safety of Serbia. But to

all these appeals the Serbian Government and Parliament proved obdurate. The allied diplomacy, moving ponderously forward—every telegram and measure having to be agreed to by all the other parties to the alliance—had just reached the point of refusing any further supplies of stores or money to Serbia unless she complied with their insistent demand, when the final invasion began.

The same sort of thing happened about Kavalla. M. Venizelos, with his almost unerring judgment of great issues, was prepared to imperil his whole personal popularity in Greece and place himself at a deadly disadvantage in his controversies with the King by intimating his readiness to acquiesce in the cession to Bulgaria of Kavalla in certain circumstances. Had the Allies been able to secure for Bulgaria the immediate cession of the uncontested zone in Macedonia and the port of Kavalla, it seems very probable that they might have been induced during the month of July to come to our aid and to march on Adrianople.

It seems certain that, even if this full result had not been obtained, the tangible cession of this territory to Bulgaria at the instance of the Allies would have made it impossible for King Ferdinand to carry his country into the hostile camp. Monsieur Radoslavoff gave in brutally frank language a perfectly truthful account of the Bulgarian position in these months. No effective measures were, however, taken, and all was left to the hazard of the battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

It would be unjust not to recognise at the same time the extraordinary difficulties with which Sir Edward Grey was confronted owing to the need of combining the diplomatic action of four separate great Powers in so delicate and painful a business as virtually coercing a then friendly Greece and an allied and suffering Serbia, specially shielded by Russia, to make territorial concessions deeply repugnant to them. Although a united diplomacy might have assisted, nothing

less than a decisive victory at the Dardanelles could at this time have counteracted in the Balkans the terrible tide of Russian defeat.

By the end of the third week in August all prospects of an immediate victory at this vital point had vanished. When our failure was fully appreciated by the competent military personages at Sofia, the Bulgarian King and Government finally made up their minds to join Germany. From that moment the ruin of Serbia was certain and irremediable. The quaking dyke of the Dardanelles campaign that had so long held off the deluge had yielded at last. It was henceforth only a question of the time-tables of Austro-German troop movements. Serbia, however, though fully conscious of her danger, remained recalcitrant to all appeals to make effective concessions. Till the last moment she kept her heel on the conquered Bulgarian districts of Macedonia, and maintained a stubborn front to the overwhelming forces that were gathering against her.

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A new tremendous event was now to strike across this darkening situation. At a Conference held at Calais early in July, the representatives of the Cabinet, viz. the Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener and Mr. Balfour, had, in accordance with the convictions of the overwhelming majority of their colleagues, argued against a further Anglo-French offensive in the West in 1915. They had proposed that the allied operations in France and Flanders should be confined to what was described as an "offensive defensive" or, to speak more accurately, an active defensive. The French had agreed; General Joffre had agreed. The agreement was open and formal. And it was on this basis that we had looked forward and prepared for the new battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula. No sooner, however, had General Joffre left the Conference than, notwithstanding these agreements, he had calmly resumed the

development of his plans for his great attack in Champagne, in which he confidently expected to break the German lines and roll them back. It was not until after the Battle of Suvla Bay had been finally lost, and we were more deeply committed in the Peninsula than ever before, that we became aware of this.

To avoid unnecessary circulation of secret documents it had been arranged that members of the War Committee wishing to read the daily War Office telegrams could do so each morning at the War Office in Lord Kitchener's anteroom. It was my practice to read every word every day. On the morning of August 21 I was thus engaged when the private secretary informed me that Lord Kitchener, who had just returned from the French Headquarters, wished to see me. I entered his room and found him standing with his back to the light. He looked at me sideways with a very odd expression on his face. I saw he had some disclosure of importance to make, and waited. After appreciable hesitation he told me that he had agreed with the French to a great offensive in France. I said at once that there was no chance of success. He said the scale would be greater than anything ever before conceived; if it succeeded, it would restore everything, including of course the Dardanelles. He had an air of suppressed excitement, like a man who has taken a great decision of terrible uncertainty and is about to put it into execution. He was of course bracing himself for the announcement he had to make that morning to the War Committee and to the Cabinet. I continued unconvinced. It was then 11 o'clock, and he drove me across in his car to Downing Street.

The Committee assembled. Lord Kitchener had no doubt apprised the Prime Minister beforehand, and he was immediately invited to make his statement. He told us that owing to the situation in Russia he could not longer maintain the attitude which was agreed upon in conjunction with the French at Calais, i.e., that a real serious offensive on a large scale in

the West should be postponed until the Allies were ready. As he put it to us, he had himself urged upon General Joffre the adoption of the offensive. In view of the fact that, as we now know, the French plans and preparations had long been in progress, had indeed never been interrupted, this must have been a work of supererogation. I immediately protested against departure from the decisions of the Cabinet maturely made and endorsed by the Calais Conference, and against an operation that could only lead to useless slaughter on a gigantic scale. I pointed out that we had neither the ammunition nor the superiority in men necessary to warrant such an assault on the enemy's fortified line; that it could not take place in time effectively to relieve Russia; that it would not prevent the Germans from pursuing their initiative in theatres other than the West; and that it would rupture fatally our plans for opening the Dardanelles. The following record has been preserved of these remarks:—

Mr. Churchill expressed his regret at such a course. The German forces on the Western front had not been reduced and were some 2,000,000 against the Allies 2,500,000. This amounted to a superiority for the Allies of five to four, which was inadequate for the offensive. Since our last offensive effort our relative strength had not altered, while the German defences had been strengthened.

It seemed to him that in the hope of relieving Russia and to gratify our great and natural desire to do so, the Allies might throw away 200,000 or 300,000 lives[1] and [much] ammunition, and might possibly gain a little ground. The attack on May 9 (Festubert-Arras) had been a failure, and the line had not been altered by it. *After* an expenditure of lives and ammunition in this way by us, the Germans would have a chance worth seizing, and it would be worth their while to bring back great forces from the East. A superiority of two to one was laid down as necessary to attack, and we (the Allies) had not got it.

[1] Obviously this should read 'men,' meaning men killed and wounded, i.e., casualties.

These views were not seriously disputed, but it was urged that the French would move in any case, and that if we did not march too, the alliance would be destroyed. Lord Kitchener was careful not to hold out any expectation of 'a decisive success,' and when pressed to define 'a decisive success' he accepted my expression 'a fundamental strategic alteration of the line.' 'There is,' he said, 'a great deal of truth in what Mr. Churchill has said, but unfortunately we have to make war as we must and not as we should like to.'

I besought the Cabinet, which followed the War Council an hour later, not to yield to the French impatience without a further conference at which all the arguments could be stated and a final appeal made. I was strongly supported by others. I was forced to admit that if the French, after hearing what we had to say, still persisted in their intention, we should of course have to conform; but I urged that a last effort should be made to avert the vast, futile and disastrous slaughter that was now impending. Sir John French, who was in London, was interrogated by the Cabinet. He also declined to give any assurance of success, and was further extremely dissatisfied with the particular sector of attack in which he was required to operate. He had not ammunition for more than seven days' offensive battle. Nevertheless he was quite ready, if ordered, to throw himself into it with a good heart. I visited him privately at Lancaster Gate, where he was staying for the night, and urged my opinion. He used the usual arguments about the necessity of acting in harmony with the French, and then unfolded to me the fact that General Joffre intended to employ no fewer than forty divisions in the French sector of attack alone. Although I must admit that the tremendous scale of the operation seemed to carry the issue into the region of the unknown, I continued recalcitrant and quitted my friend in the deepest anxiety. I saw that we were confronted with the ruin of the campaign alike in the East and in the West.

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The decision to make a general attack in France involved the immediate starvation, or at any rate malnutrition, in ammunition and in drafts, of the army on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Although large numbers of men had to be sent thither merely to keep Sir Ian Hamilton's units in the field, this number, while enough to be a heavy loss elsewhere, was not sufficient to produce any useful result. The operations on the Peninsula came to a standstill, and the Turks hastened to replace their heavy losses and reorganise their shaken and in some cases shattered formations. Meanwhile, disease and despondency were at work in our own army. The anguish of supreme success narrowly but fatally missed, the sense of being ill-supported from home, the uncertainty about the future intentions of the Government, the shortage of ammunition, the threatening advent of winter, the rigorous privations of officers and men, exposed the Dardanelles army to the most melancholy ordeal. The numerous and powerful opponents of the enterprise, the advocates of evacuation, the partisans of competing schemes, found themselves well supplied with all that they desired. In these depressing conditions only the patient endurance of the British troops and the unquenchable spirit of Anzac enabled a firm posture of the army and its consequent existence to be maintained.

But now a very curious incident occurred, which added greatly to the perplexities of the British Government. The political power and influence of General Sarrail rested upon foundations which it was not easy then precisely to define or explain. This officer, having been removed by General Joffre in July from the Verdun command in which he had distinguished himself, had obtained, through profound political influence, the command of the French troops in the Orient in succession to General Gouraud, who had been seriously wounded. Whatever dispute there might be about his military achievements, his irreligious convictions were above suspicion. There appeared to be an understanding in French

governing circles that he was to be assigned an important independent rôle in the East, which would give him the opportunity of gathering the military laurels from which the French Radical-Socialist elements were determined anti-Clerical generals should not be debarred. Judge of our astonishment when, on September 1, in the midst of the preparations for a supreme battle in France, while our own army at the Dardanelles was cut to the barest minimum in drafts and ammunition, the Admiralty suddenly received, through the French naval attaché, the request to assist the French Ministry of Marine in despatching from Marseilles four new French divisions to the Dardanelles! We were then informed that the French Government had decided to form a separate Army of the East, of six divisions, which, under the command of General Sarrail, would during the month of October land on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, and advance thence upon the forts of Chanak in conjunction with our renewed attacks upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. We were requested to arrange for the relief of the two French divisions at Helles, in order that, added to the four new French divisions from France, this separate army should be constituted for the new operation. It appeared for a space that what the most unanswerable arguments of reason, of daring, and of duty could not achieve, was to be easily secured by the interplay of French political forces. For once the gloomy embarrssaments of our councils were broken by the sunlight of a happy hour. We made haste to accept the French proposal. Lord Kitchener instantly promised the two divisions to relieve the French at Helles. Mr. Balfour began at once to gather the necessary transport. Mr. Bonar Law joined with me in pressing the despatch of still larger British forces, to 'make a good job of it.' Alas for the British Cabinet! They saw the truth quite clearly. They were sound and right in their general view. It was not through wrong judgment that they failed, but through want of will-power. In such times the Kingdom of Heaven can only be taken by storm.

But then the question arose, 'Was it possible General Joffre could have agreed?' Inquiry showed that he had agreed upon conditions. His own position was not so secure as to leave him indifferent to the pressure from the political left flank. He had been forced to manœuvre. His conditions were that the reinforcing divisions for the Dardanelles were not to leave France before the main shock of his impending battle had occurred, nor until it could be seen whether its results would be decisive or not. Pressed on September 11, at Calais, by Lord Kitchener as to the time which it would take to ascertain this, he stated that he would know at the end of the first week's fighting one way or the other; that if it was clear by then that a general German retreat in the West—which would have to be followed up by every available man—was not going to be compelled, all the troops assigned to the Dardanelles would be released. October 10 was the date fixed for the embarkation of the leading divisions. It was noticed, however, that General Sarrail, instead of hurrying out to the Dardanelles to survey the situation on the spot and perfect his plans, as Lord Kitchener strongly pressed him to do, preferred to remain in Paris attending to matters which were doubtless of importance.

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I expressed myself on this situation as follows:—

September 21, 1915.

1. At present we are waiting for the result of the battle in France before coming to any decision about the Dardanelles. But surely we ought to make up our minds and make our plans on the assumption that no fundamental change takes place on the French front: and all preliminary action necessary to another great effort at the Dardanelles ought to be taken. For instance: it is understood that Lord Kitchener and General Joffre propose that unless there is a decisive victory in France two British and four French Divisions shall begin to embark about October 10 for the Dardanelles. We ought *now* to settle if this will be enough to ensure success, and we ought now to be

preparing whatever more is needed. From October 10 to the middle of November all transports will be fully occupied in carrying the six above mentioned Divisions. If more are needed, either they must start now, or else the new attack at the Dardanelles will have to wait three or four weeks more till they all arrive, thus pushing the operations into the third week of December. Owing to deep differences of opinion about whether the Dardanelles enterprise should be pushed through or abandoned, it is very difficult even to discuss these questions, and consequently when there is a fair excuse like the battle pending in France they are simply allowed to slumber. Meanwhile the vital days are slipping away.

2. It is imperative that we should come to a decision on the main issue, and thereafter act as a united body. Up to now the opposition to the enterprise has never been strong enough to prevent each step being taken, but the friction has been so great that each step has been taken too late. . . . Are we now going to do the same thing a fourth time on the largest scale of all?

3. By the 12th of August we knew that the Anzac-Suvla attack had not succeeded. It is now the 21st of September. About 50,000 drafts and reinforcements have been sent, i.e., not enough to make any difference, except for clinging on. Otherwise no action, no decision, no plan. Meanwhile the Turks are gathering their remaining strength, the Germans are threatening to march down, and the winter is approaching.

Of course the battle in France is at present the dominant factor. I do not attempt to go back on that. But I beseech my colleagues to take *now* all necessary decisions and all subsidiary and preliminary steps, so that when the result of the French offensive is manifest, action at the Dardanelles, if decided on, can proceed with the utmost speed and ample strength.

4. A plan should be made by the General Staff with estimates of all the troops, guns, and ammunition necessary to ensure success. A date should be fixed before the end of November by which all must be concentrated ready for attack. Everything should be worked up to that date, i.e., if necessary two divisions should start from England now on the chance of the rest going later so as not to block the transports after the 10th of October. They can wait in Egypt and can come

back if it is subsequently decided not to make another attempt. As the armies at the Dardanelles will be greatly increased and a new landing-place is probable, the additional small craft must be got ready and sent out. Not a day should be lost in this. Ammunition should be accumulated for a Dardanelles attack the moment the fate of the French offensive is decided. Unless all these plans are worked out *now* and the necessary steps taken, an immense delay will be caused when the final decision is taken.

Are we going to wait another three weeks before even beginning?

W. S. C.

The impossibility of procuring adequate supplies of high-explosive shell in time for the battles on the Peninsula had led me during July and August to search for a substitute which could be quickly manufactured. I conceived that this would be provided by masses of bombs fired from the Stokes gun, which brilliant invention had been shown to Mr. Lloyd George and me in June, and of which the Minister of Munitions had, without reference to the War Office, already ordered a thousand.

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September 24, 1915.

I have for some time past been deeply impressed with the possibilities of attacking trenches at close quarters under cover and by means of hurricanes of vertically dropping bombs discharged from short-range engines; and after obtaining Lord Kitchener's approval, I have consulted with the various authorities concerned.

In the Stokes gun we have a weapon of extraordinary simplicity and cheapness, practically noiseless and flashless, and so light and mobile that it can be carried by one man. The two great advantages to be derived from this method of attack are: first, the intimacy of the support afforded to our assaulting infantry, as fire can be continued until they are within 50 yards of the enemy's trenches; secondly, the possibility of obtaining immense supplies of high-explosive bombs of simple manufacture far sooner than a proportionate delivery

of much more complicated high-explosive artillery shell could be obtained.

All the ideas on which this scheme rests have come from officers who have been themselves constantly engaged in trench warfare. In order to give a fair chance to such a method of attack, it is necessary that it should not be attempted until it can be applied on a very large scale. To send out these guns by scores and dozens and disperse them among infantry battalions in the trenches is not to give the plan a fair opportunity. What is necessary is a regular corps of trained men who have every necessary appliance, know exactly how to handle the weapons, and have thought out all the details of their combination. A thousand Stokes guns were ordered two months ago by the Minister of Munitions[1] on his own responsibility, and I believe it would be possible to bring 200 of them simultaneously into action, with a large supply of ammunition, about the middle of November next. This mode of attack would appear to be particularly suited to the Gallipoli Peninsula, as the 'up and down' nature of the country makes it almost impossible for artillery to search the ground thoroughly. The experiment should be tried on a great scale with 200 guns, either on the enemy's lines at Cape Helles or on his positions at Sari Bair.

W. S. C.

On September 20 the sinister news reached London that a Bulgarian mobilisation was imminent and that Bulgaria was believed to have committed herself definitely to the Central Powers. On the next day the Bulgarian Prime Minister told a meeting of his followers that the cause of the Allies was lost; that Bulgaria must not attach herself to the losing side; that the Quadruple Alliance had only made vague proposals to Bulgaria about the occupation of the uncontested zone *after* the war; and that if Bulgaria went to war, she was assured of the neutrality of Roumania. At midnight on the 22d, the Turks signed an agreement ceding the Dedeagatch Railway to Bulgaria; and that same day Serbia signalled with alarm the increasing movement of Austro-German forces towards her

[1] Mr. Lloyd George.

northern frontier. The long-dreaded southward thrust was about to begin.

It is significant that while Bulgaria had patiently awaited the result of the Battle of Suvla Bay before taking her ghastly plunge, her rulers did not hesitate to commit themselves on the eve of the far larger battle which was known to be impending in France. The Germans could not fail to note the massing of guns and troops in Artois and Champagne, and had in fact made all preparations to receive the shock. But their confidence in the result was shared by the Bulgarian General Staff.

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At dawn on September 26 the great battle in the West began. It comprised a subsidiary attack by about thirty British and French divisions at Loos, and a main attack by forty French divisions in Champagne. Sir John French had been compelled, in order to combine with the French, to accept a sphere of attack against his better judgment; but, having agreed to conform to General Joffre's plans, he threw himself into their execution with his customary determination. The French attack in Champagne has since been described as 'the unlimited method'—i.e., the armies were hurled on to advance as far as they could 'into the blue,' in the confident expectation that they would carry, not merely the front systems, which had been subjected to bombardment, but all intact positions and defences likely to be met with in rear. In the absurd misconceptions of the Staff, large masses of cavalry were brought up to press the victory to a decisive conclusion. At the fatal signal the brave armies marched into the firestorm. The ardour of the French infantry was not unmatched by their British comrades. The issue, however, was never in doubt. The German calculations of the strength of their front and of the numbers of troops needed to defend it were accurate and sound. Their drive against Russia, their project against the

Balkans proceeded unchecked. In the first week the Anglo-French attack had secured slight advances of no strategic significance at various points, a few score of guns, and a few thousand prisoners, at the expense of more than 300,000 casualties.

The time had now come for General Joffre to release the troops for the East, but he was naturally reluctant to admit defeat. The downfall of his hopes was concealed by a continuance of the fighting, and the departure of the Dardanelles divisions receded week by week. Meanwhile, the winter season steadily approached the army on the Peninsula, and the catastrophe of the Balkans arrived.

On September 25 the general mobilisation of the Bulgarian Army had begun. Those who placed reliance on the optimistic accounts of the fighting in France which were supplied by the military authorities here and in France found it impossible to believe that the Germans, faced by such formidable assaults in the West, and extended in immense operations in the East, could spare a new army to conquer Serbia, and they therefore continued incredulous to the last. During the third and fourth weeks of September the concentration of considerable Austro-German forces north of the Danube became unmistakable. On October 4 our Intelligence reported the presence of Mackensen at Temesvar. Belated and frantic efforts to deter the Bulgarians, exhausting the whole apparatus of promises and threats, were received with sullen impassivity, and the mobilisation of the Bulgarian armies proceeded regularly. King Ferdinand pursued his profoundly considered and most perilous policy with mechanical precision. An iron discipline gripped the peasant soldiers, and a ruthless suppression quelled the parliamentary forces. Serbia, unreasonable to the last, prepared to meet her doom with passionate appeals to her Allies and dauntless heroism in the field.

The repercussion of these events must now be studied. The only power which could come to the aid of Serbia before it

was too late was Greece. Accordingly, at last, an earnest and united effort was made by all the Allies to procure the entry of Greece into the general war. Twice she had placed herself at their disposal. Twice she had been rebuffed. Now it was the turn of the Allies to ask. By treaty Greece was obliged to aid Serbia against a Bulgarian attack. King Constantine and the Greece that followed him claimed that this treaty did not apply to a war in which Serbia was attacked not only by Bulgaria but by a great Power. Serbia invoked the treaty, demanded the support of Greece, and also appealed to the Allies for 150,000 men. M. Venizelos, again Prime Minister and at the head of a parliamentary majority fresh from elections, urged the Allies to send troops to Salonika to enable Greece to enter the war according to her honourable obligations. As a military measure to aid Serbia directly, the landing at this juncture of allied forces at Salonika was absurd. The hostile armies concentrating on the eastern and northern frontiers of Serbia were certain to overwhelm and overrun that country before any effective aid, other than Greek aid, could possibly arrive. As a political move to encourage and determine the action of Greece, the despatch of allied troops to Salonika was justified. But the question arose: Where were the troops to come from? Obviously from the Dardanelles and only from the Dardanelles. A French and a British division, all that could be spared and all that could get to Salonika in time, were accordingly taken from Sir Ian Hamilton's hard-pressed army in the closing days of September.

The reader who has a true sense of the values in the problem will not be surprised to learn that this despatch of troops from the Dardanelles produced the opposite effect to that intended or desired. King Constantine had been trained all his life as a soldier. He had studied very closely the strategic situation of his country and conceived himself to be an authority on the subject. The road to his heart was through some sound military plan, and this he was never offered by the

Allies. When he learned that the allied help was to take the form of withdrawing two divisions from the Dardanelles, he naturally concluded that that enterprise was about to be abandoned. He saw himself, if he entered the war, confronted after a short interval not only with the Bulgarians but with the main body of the Turkish Army now chained to the Gallipoli Peninsula. He read in the British and French action a plain confession of impending failure in the main operation whose progress during the whole year had dominated the war situation in the East. It proved impossible to remove these anxieties from the Royal mind and added to his German sympathies they were decisive. 'His Majesty,' said Sir Francis Elliot [October 6], 'was disturbed by the fact that troops had been brought from the Dardanelles to Salonika. He thought that it was the beginning of the abandonment of the expedition and would release the whole Turkish Army to reinforce the Bulgarians.'

While the troops were already on the way and the British Navy were netting the harbour of Salonika against submarines, King Constantine dismissed M. Venizelos, on whose invitation they had come. The Allies therefore found themselves confronted with a pro-German Greece determined to repudiate its treaty obligations to Serbia. Thus the object of the expedition to Salonika had entirely disappeared. But those powerful persons in France and England who had advocated it were determined to persevere. The miseries of Serbia fighting desperately against superior forces, the shame and sorrow of watching a small ally trampled down, combined with dislike and weariness of the Dardanelles to form a tide of opinion impossible to resist. I continued to point to the Dardanelles as the master key to the problem, and to a naval attempt to force the Straits as the sole chance of changing the action of Bulgaria and averting the destruction of Serbia. Even up to the last moment the arrival of a British fleet in the Sea of Marmora might have transformed the situation. The Bul-

garians, having mobilised against one side, might have marched against the other. On October 6 I made my last attempt with Mr. Balfour.

Mr. Churchill to Mr. Balfour.

October 6, 1915.

I must revert again to the question of the renewal of the naval attack on the Narrows. You should not overlook the fact that Admiral de Robeck is deeply committed against this by what has taken place, and his resolution and courage, which in other matters are beyond dispute, are in this case prejudiced by the line he has taken since the beginning. Could he have foreseen after the 18th [of March], the terrible course and vast expansion of the military operations, it is inconceivable that he would not have renewed the attack. But in those days the loss of four or five thousand men was the most that was expected and a swift victory was counted upon. Since then probably 150,000 French and British troops have been killed or wounded on the Peninsula. The Admiral is therefore in a very difficult position. The naval attack is admittedly a great hazard. If it fails there is a heavy loss: if it succeeds he would be stultified. Is it not natural that in these circumstances his opposition to it should be deep-seated?

I notice the complaints which he makes about the steering capacity of the Monitors. If these are well founded, it would be necessary to use battleships. These could be protected against under-water damage by a variety of methods. The presence of even a few ships in the Marmora would absolutely cut off the Turkish Army and relieve us of all our difficulties. I believe we have been all these months in the position of the Spanish prisoner who languished for twenty years in a dungeon until one morning the idea struck him to push the door, which had been open all the time.

Mr. Balfour, however, although perfectly ready to bear the supreme responsibility if Admiral de Robeck and the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Jackson, had been willing to make the attempt, could not feel justified in overriding them or replacing them by others. It only remained, therefore, to await the catastrophe.

The Cabinet found the hopelessness of the situation unendurable, and apparently the French Government was similarly distressed. A vehement wish to rush troops to the aid of Serbia manifested itself. It was in vain that the impossibility of their arriving before it was too late was explained. On Friday, October 6, after heated and confused discussions, the Cabinet decided to refer the tangled situation to the considered judgment of the combined staffs of the Admiralty and the War Office. The great question—What to do? was accordingly remitted to the naval and military experts gathered together under the guidance of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the First Sea Lord. Through the whole of Saturday and Sunday these officers considered and prepared their report; and on Monday, October 9, this remarkable document was circulated to Ministers. The General Staff, in loyal accord with General Headquarters in France and with almost all orthodox military opinion, recommended that everything should be concentrated on the prolongation of the Battle of Loos, from which they considered decisive results might be obtained. In this they were proved wrong by the events not only of 1915, but of 1916 and of 1917. Although the British Army continued its operations with the fullest support and to the utmost limit of its ammunition, not only were they unable to break the German line but a very large proportion of their initial gains were wrested from them by the German counter-attacks. If Sir Douglas Haig with the enormous expenditure of munitions and life which characterised the battles on the Somme in 1916 or at Passchendaele in 1917 was unable to achieve any decisive results, what chance had Sir John French with the scanty offensive resources of 1915? The best and most orthodox military opinion was at this time so far out of touch with reality, that the General Staff still contemplated the irruption of a mass of cavalry through the German line. What the cavalry would have done if they had got through was not explained.

But passing from the general question of the offensive in France to the specific issues raised by the situation in the East, the General Staff of the Army and the Admiralty War Staff pronounced in no uncertain tones against the Salonika enterprise and in favour of a continuance of the operations at the Dardanelles. The advocates of Salonika had been those who had pressed most strongly for the remission of the disputed questions to the unbiased and undiluted judgment of the naval and military experts. They were completely indisposed to accept the pronouncement of the tribunal to which they had appealed.

When these matters came before the War Council (whose numbers had now been increased to include the prominent figures on both sides of the controversy) on the evening of October 9, it was evident that no agreement could be reached as between Salonika and the Dardanelles. On the other hand, it was common ground that large reinforcements should be sent to the Eastern theatre as soon as possible. As these troop movements would necessarily take several weeks, and it could be plausibly argued that the situation would develop in the meanwhile in such a way as to make ultimate concord possible, it was finally settled that six divisions should be withdrawn from France and sent to Egypt, and that what should happen to them after that should be settled later. The Prime Minister felt himself constrained to agree to this arrangement. He was, in my opinion, throughout unwavering in his intention to persevere at the Dardanelles, and he used every resource of patience and tact to guide and carry opinion in that direction and to secure the necessary decisions at the earliest possible moment. A more vigorous course would probably have broken up the Government. I was, and am, strongly of opinion that it would have been much better to break up the Cabinet, and let one section or the other carry out their view in its integrity, than to preserve what was called 'the national unity' at the expense of vital executive action.

But after that there would still have been the difficulty with the French.

The French Government had by this time made up their mind whole-heartedly in favour of Salonika. They declared their intention of sending General Sarrail's army thither instead of to the Dardanelles, and urged us to support them as strongly as possible. Another series of disputes therefore broke out in the Cabinet upon the proposal to divert to Salonika the troops now under orders for Egypt, and the consequent abandonment of any further great enterprise to open the Straits. Military authority was again appealed to; and the General Staff in a paper, every word of which was justified by subsequent events, showed that there was no possibility of saving the Serbians, and that the Salonika enterprise was a dangerous and futile dissipation and misdirection of forces. Fortified by the unequivocal recommendation of all the military and naval authorities, the Cabinet refused to agree to the French proposals, and insisted upon the reinforcing British divisions being sent according to the agreement to Egypt, where they were to be fitted out with their semi-tropical equipment, etc. On this General Joffre was sent by the French Government over to England. After his defeat in Champagne he was in no position to resist the strong tendencies of his Government, nor possibly particularly anxious to keep General Sarrail in Paris. He arrived, and in the absence of the Prime Minister, who was at this time temporarily incapacitated by illness, met the leading members of the Cabinet. I was excluded from this Conference, no doubt because it was known that I should certainly prove intractable. After the Conference was over the Cabinet was informed that General Joffre had pledged his military judgment in favour of the necessity and practicability of the Salonika expedition, and had threatened to resign the command of the French armies if the British did not effectively co-operate. In spite of the strenuous resistance of the British General Staff, and in the

MAP V.

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ROUMANIA
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DOBRUJA
BOSNIA
Belgrade
SERVIA
HERZEGOVINA
MONTENEGRO
NOVIBAZAR
Nish
BULGARIA
Varna
Sofia
EASTERN
RUMELIA
KOSOVO
Uskub
Adrianople
SCUTARI
TURKEY
Constantinople
MONASTIR
SALONICA
Salonika
Kavalla
Enos
Gallipoli
MAGEDON
JANINA
GREECE
Smyrna
Athens
THE BALKAN
PENINSULA

flattest defiance of their advice, the Cabinet yielded to this outrageous threat.

The final policy of the British Government, though erroneous in direction and too late in time, was not without its grandeur. On October 12 the following declaration was made both to Roumania and to Greece:—

> The only effective manner in which help can be given to Serbia is by the immediate declaration of war by Roumania and Greece against the Austro-Germans and Bulgaria. The British Government in that event would be prepared to sign forthwith a Military Convention with Roumania, whereby Great Britain will guarantee to bring into action in the Balkan theatre, not including the forces already in Gallipoli, an army of at least 200,000 men. If the French send a force as they contemplate doing, that force would be part of this total; but if not, the British Government would undertake to provide the whole number themselves.
>
> This force would include a number of our best and most seasoned divisions, and we shall maintain them in the field waging war on behalf of our Allies until the objective is accomplished. A steady flow of troops will commence as soon as transport is available and will be continuously maintained. We estimate that 150,000 men will be available by the end of November, and the total 200,000 will be reached by the end of the year.
>
> The Military Convention will state precisely the dates at which the different portions of the army will arrive. We are repeating this offer to Greece, and if Roumania is prepared to act immediately, we shall call upon Greece imperatively to fulfil her treaty obligations to Serbia.

Such a spirit manifested three months earlier would have prevented the disasters by whose imminence it had been evoked. Such an army applied in August or September, either to the Gallipoli Peninsula or to the Asiatic shore, would have overpowered the Turks already extended at their fullest strain, and transformed defeat into victory throughout the East. But now these immense offers, not arising from foresight

but extorted only by the pressure of events, fell upon deaf ears. Neither Roumania nor Greece would move an inch.

In these throes Sir Edward Carson resigned because of the failure to rescue Serbia, and M. Delcassé because of the attempt.

* * * * *

On October 9 the storm of ruin burst upon the Balkans, and Mackensen, crossing the Danube with nine German and Austrian divisions, entered Belgrade from the north. Two days later the Bulgarians invaded Serbia from the east. This double and converging attack was overwhelming. Uskub fell on October 22, and Nish on November 2. In another month Monastir was captured, and by the middle of December the Serbian Army was destroyed or driven completely from Serbian soil.

The relentless severity of the Bulgarian pursuit exposed the retreating Serbian forces and population to the worst horrors of war and winter. Scores of thousands of defenceless people perished, and the whole country was ravaged and reduced to complete subjugation. Meanwhile, large Anglo-French forces began to accumulate at Salonika as helpless spectators of these events, the Allied Army on the Gallipoli Peninsula was left to rot, and the British Fleet at the Dardanelles remained motionless.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ABANDONMENT OF THE DARDANELLES

Consequences—Pessimism—The Approaching Danger and Its Limitations—Reflections—The Shadow of Evacuation—Obligations to Australia and New Zealand—Obligations to Russia—Superior Turkish Will-power—The Gas Question—Progress of the Evacuation Idea—Recall of Sir Ian Hamilton—General Monro's Report—Effect on Lord Kitchener—Admiral von Usedom's Report of October 31 to the German Emperor—The Plans of Commodore Keyes and Rear-Admiral Wemyss—Commodore Keyes Returns to London—Outline of the Keyes Plan—The New War Committee—Its First Indecisions—Lord Kitchener's Mission—I Resign from the Government—Confusion and Difficulties of the Times—A General View.

THE events described in the last chapter led directly to the abandonment of the enterprise against the Dardanelles. In the first place, the impending opening of through communications between Germany and Turkey seemed to offer to the Turks the prospect of large supplies of all kinds and particularly of heavy guns and ammunition. Our troops on the Peninsula, whose positions did not allow of any local withdrawal, were threatened with a very great increase in the hostile bombardment. Secondly, the Salonika expedition must become a serious rival to the Dardanelles, drawing upon the existing strength of a harassed army and intercepting and diverting reinforcements and supplies. Apprehensions of approaching failure, if not indeed of final disaster, were rife.

I did what I could to stem the adverse movement in the Cabinet and correct extravagant pessimism.

October 6, 1915.

It is precipitately assumed that the establishment by the Germans of through communication with Constantinople and the consequent passage of ammunition, guns, etc., will

render the position of our army in Gallipoli immediately untenable, and there is a tendency to jump to extreme conclusions without a detailed examination of all the intervening stages.

The first question is, Is a great Austro-German army going to strike South? When will this movement begin in force? When will the passage of the Danube take place? How long will it take after the Danube has been passed for the enemy to establish rail or water communication with Widin or Sophia? What will be the weather conditions during these operations? When rail or river communication has been established, what proportion of the rolling-stock of the railways concerned, particularly in the early stages of the operations, will be available after the needs of the supply of the Austro-German armies operating have been met, i.e., how many trains of Turkish ammunition a day can be passed through to Sophia and from Sophia on to Constantinople? What damage can be done to the railroad during the operations, and how long will that damage take to repair? What further enterprises can be directed against the railroad by aerial attack on bridges and trains? In this connection it should be noted that seaplanes operating in the Sea of Marmora and replenished by submarines have many important bridges and culverts on the approaches to Constantinople within easy radius of action. The number of anti-aircraft guns possessed in the initial stages by the Turks on these railway lines will not be large. Even a culvert blown up or a train derailed by bombing may be productive of two or three days' delay.

When Constantinople is reached, the ammunition has still to be transported to the Gallipoli Peninsula. No great quantity of it can be carried along the Bulair road. Almost the whole, particularly the heavy shells, must go by water across the Marmora. Hitherto, we have never had more than two submarines acting in the Marmora at one time, but the First Lord has informed us that nine large ones are available. It is a question whether these numbers should not be increased, in view of the great importance of their work. Submarines can operate for thirty days at a stretch in the Marmora, and therefore, if it were of great consequence to interrupt the supplies for a certain period, the whole force might be employed at once, probably resulting in the destruction by gunfire and

torpedo of the bulk of the small craft engaged in the transmission of supplies. Seven or eight submarines operating at once ought to be able to establish an absolute blockade over the water exits from Constantinople. It is impossible to believe that with the resources at their disposal the Admiralty will fail to make the transportation of ammunition by water, if not impossible, at any rate precarious in the last degree, and accompanied throughout with an enormous proportion of loss. This applies with even more force to heavy guns than to ammunition, and particularly to the heavy classes of ammunition. At present the Turks have no large number of heavy guns in the Peninsula. In particular they have no large quantity of heavy Howitzers, 6-inch, 8-inch, 9-inch, etc., similar to those employed in France in great masses. The transportation of these classes of guns should be vigorously opposed. Aerial reconnaissance should detect their landing-places and the points on which they are to be mounted. A lengthy period may certainly be expected to lapse before any large addition to the enemy's heavy guns on the Peninsula can be made. With regard to the existing guns, it is argued that they will receive a more abundant supply, but it should be remembered that the fire of the Monitors has completely quelled the Asiatic batteries, which were at one time so grave an annoyance, and there is no reason why, with the floating artillery at our disposal, combined with good aerial work by observation and bombing, the guns should not be marked down and their service rendered perilous in the extreme, if indeed they are not in many cases destroyed. At every stage in this business we have great power of opposition to the enemy's intentions, and, if our resources are used with energy and resolution, there is no reason why the danger should not be kept within reasonable dimensions. . . .

But even if we are to expect that after some period in the latter part of November the artillery fire directed against our positions will increase in severity, that is no reason why our troops should not be able to maintain themselves. They now hold extensive lines more than fifteen miles in length, and the number of troops in any one area is not excessive. The broken character of the ground at Helles, and still more at Anzac, affords innumerable opportunities of securing effective defilade. The steep cliffs by the seashore afford the means of making

completely secure underground barracks. Had the Germans held the positions we have been holding for all these months, a system of subterranean habitations, lighted by electric light, lined with concrete, and properly warmed and drained, would have been in existence. Even now there is time to make immense improvements, both in our trenches and in our resting accommodation. For the rest, the troops will bear the shell fire as well on the Gallipoli Peninsula as they have so long in the Ypres salient, where positions subject to every military vice and not less effectively commanded have been held month after month in spite of the fire of batteries incomparably heavier and more numerous, and far more abundantly supplied with ammunition, than anything we are likely to receive in the Gallipoli Peninsula for a long time to come.

The question of the beaches and the landing of supplies requires special consideration, as a great increase in the field gunfire would add to the many difficulties which exist at present. The use of properly devised smoke screens by day, and the full employment of the dark hours, should greatly mitigate this menace. We have already more than thirty days' supplies for all the forces. The water difficulty is passing away with the summer, and if measures are taken with sufficient energy in the next month or six weeks much larger reserves should be accumulated under perfect underground cover in the cliffs' sides and the gulleys.

Whether it is desirable to leave an army of these dimensions indefinitely to waste by fire and sickness on the Gallipoli Peninsula without hope of an offensive or any plan to relieve it, is another question. But if it is decided to take that course, there is no reason at the present time to doubt our ability to maintain ourselves, in spite of losses, for an almost indefinite period.

When dangers are a long way off and it is desired to emphasise the need for immediate action, one is often led to speak of those dangers in exaggerated and too sweeping terms. For instance, the approach of the submarine was regarded by me with the utmost dread, and I had even gone so far as to write that their arrival would be fatal. In fact, however, when the danger came, it was successfully grappled with by the Admiralty and reduced to its proper dimensions. The landing and supply of far larger armies on the Gallipoli Peninsula has

been successfully accomplished since the arrival of the German submarines than we had ever attempted beforehand. Our own resources grow with the resources of the enemy, and as the warfare in this theatre gets more thoroughly understood. We must not be in a hurry to yield to the prospect of dangers and difficulties which, when stoutly confronted, will not be found to contain any decisive element.

W. S. C.

On the same day (October 6) I circulated to the whole Cabinet my memorandum of July, predicting the Austro-German advance against Serbia. I added:—

. . . On August 12 Sir Ian Hamilton reported the failure of his attempt and asked for large reinforcements, and for drafts to raise his units to full strength. It is now October 6.

Nearly three months have passed since the plan of sending allied troops to the Vardar was favourably entertained by the Cabinet. But the four Powers were still corresponding on the point when the Bulgarian mobilisation occurred. Every suggestion made by any one of them has been pulled to pieces by the others; and the obvious remedy for this state of things, viz., that we should send a person of the highest consequence as an envoy to the Balkans—so often urged—was never adopted.

In July we were assured that the Germans were about to begin a great offensive in the West, and were actually concentrating large armies for that purpose in the neighbourhood of Cologne. So far from this being true, it is we who have taken the offensive. The wise decisions of the Calais conference were thrown to the winds by the generals. Our action in the Balkans and at Gallipoli has been paralysed at the very moment when it was most urgent and would have been most fruitful. It will soon be possible to measure what we have gained instead in France, and what those gains have cost in life and limb.

When the new Government was formed the belief was widely held that some form of national service would be introduced. More than 4½ months have passed and the Cabinet has never yet ventured to discuss the subject. During the last two months our losses have greatly exceeded our recruiting,

and the total of the British armies instead of growing has already begun rapidly to dwindle.

My object in now circulating this paper is not to make reproaches nor to boast superior foresight, but to implore my colleagues to rouse themselves to effective and energetic action before it is too late.

W. S. C.

On October 15 I dealt with the question of evacuation.

Nothing leads more surely to disaster than that a military plan should be pursued with crippled steps and in a lukewarm spirit in the face of continual nagging within the executive circle. Unity ought not to mean that a number of gentlemen are willing to sit together on condition either that the evil day of decision is postponed, or that not more than a half-decision should be provisionally adopted. Even in politics such methods are unhealthy. In war they are a crime. There is no disgrace in honest and loyal decisions, however the incalculable event may subsequently fall. Even withdrawals and capitulations if they are necessary should not be flinched from. But there would be enduring shame in impeding a decision, in hampering military action when it is decided on, in denying a fair chance to a warlike enterprise to which the troops have been committed, or in so acting, even unconsciously and unintentionally, that an executive stalemate is maintained until disaster supervenes. Every war decision must be forced to a clear cut issue, and no thought of personal friendship or political unity can find any place in such a process. The soldiers who are ordered to their deaths have a right to a plan, as well as a cause.

I have done my utmost to co-operate with those who seek to bring effective aid to Serbia, and I believe that the gaining of Greece and Roumania to our side now is a more urgent and a more important objective than forcing the Dardanelles—would indeed, if attained, carry the Dardanelles with it. But whether this plan will succeed will be settled in a few days. Then we must make up our minds one way or the other about Gallipoli, without compromise of any kind.

* * * * *

Australia and New Zealand sent the first armies they have ever raised to fight against Germany in Europe. Without

consultation with their Governments or Parliaments, these forces were sent by Lord Kitchener to the Gallipoli Peninsula. A greater mark of confidence in a single man has scarcely ever been shown. By feats of arms and military conduct of the highest order, they have seized and held at a cost of 30,000 men and cruel hardships a position close to the vitals of their enemy, from which, if properly sustained, it is probable that no force that can be brought to bear can move them. Anzac is the greatest word in the history of Australasia. Is it for ever to carry to future generations of Australians and New Zealanders memories of forlorn heroism and of sacrifices made in vain? . . .

Russia has lost upward of 4½ million men in this war, and has choked nearly a million Germans in her own blood. At the beginning of the war she sacrificed her armies in premature efforts to relieve the French and ourselves. Our operations in the West have totally failed to take any pressure off her during the last five months, when she has been exposed to the main offensive of the enemy. In spite of all her difficulties and deficiencies and losses absolutely beyond comparison, she continues to make head, most stubbornly and loyally, against the common enemy, and in her continuing to do so lies the hope of a successful issue from the war. The one great prize and reward which Russia can gain is Constantinople. The surest means of re-equipping her, the one way of encouraging her efforts, is the opening of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. With the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula that hope dies.

I do not dwell at length upon the military consequences. Turkey can be re-equipped by Germany, and the East will be thrown open to her. The Balkan Peninsula will be gone. Roumania will be permanently cut off from all allied munitions. Greece will be threatened by Turkish as well as Bulgarian armies. *Our interests in Egypt, our forces advancing to Bagdad, the Russians in the Caucasus, will soon feel the weight of the Turkish divisions now nailed precariously to the Gallipoli Peninsula. A larger number of soldiers will be required over longer periods of time to arrest the Turco-German efforts in wider and more remote theatres, once the passage between Europe and Asia has been lost, than might now suffice to decide the whole matter in our favour.*[1]

[1] The italics are new.

History will no doubt also dwell on the extraordinary valour and tenacity of the Turkish resistance. When the secrets of all the General Staffs are revealed, we shall know how profound were the anxieties with which a renewal of the naval attack of the 18th March was regarded by the Turkish and German commanders. We shall realise the superb efforts by which Enver Pasha and General von Sanders sustained their army in spite of the utmost difficulty in obtaining food or ammunition; how they persevered in face of assaults which again and again were within an ace of succeeding, in spite of waves of despair which might at any moment have broken up their army, in the teeth of an enemy whose advance though slow had never been set back, with the sea and a capital starving into revolution at their backs, and with relief hoped for and counted on for months in vain. And the whole episode will stand as an example of the triumph of superior will-power over superior resources.

And on October 20[1]:—

More imminently dangerous than the arrival of German guns and ammunition at Constantinople is the arrival of large German gas installations. Some time ago our troops on the Peninsula were provided with the earlier patterns of respirators, but for three or four months this danger has receded, and it seems very probable that the respirators have deteriorated and that the men have not been practised in their use as are our troops in France. Unless these apprehensions are groundless, we ought without delay to send out a complete new outfit of the latest helmets and to make sure that during the period of inactivity while we are making up our minds the troops are duly practised in their use. This is a danger which can certainly be provided against if steps are taken now.

I trust that the unreasonable prejudice against the use by us of gas upon the Turks will now cease. The massacres by the Turks of Armenians and the fact that practically no British prisoners have been taken on the Peninsula, though there are many thousands of missing, should surely remove all false sentiment on this point, indulged in as it is only at the expense of our own men. Large installations of British gas should be

[1] Circulated the same day.

sent out without delay. The winter season is frequently marked by south-westerly gales, which would afford a perfect opportunity for the employment of gas by us.

None of these recommendations produced any effective results. Our policy diverged increasingly from the conceptions I had formed of the conduct of the war. Only the fear of a massacre on the Beaches and of the loss of a large proportion of the Army delayed for a time the evacuation of Gallipoli and the abandonment of the enterprise. As a first step, on October 11, Lord Kitchener telegraphed to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

What is your estimate of the probable loss which would be entailed to our forces if the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula was decided upon and carried out in the most careful manner? No decision has been arrived at yet on this question of evacuation, but I feel I ought to have your views. In your reply you need not consider the possible future danger to the Empire which might be thus caused.[1]

Sir Ian Hamilton, who had already declared evacuation to be 'unthinkable,' replied on the 12th that—

It would not be wise to reckon on getting out of Gallipoli with less loss than that of half the total force, as well as guns which must be used to the last, stores, railway plant, horses. . . . We might be very lucky and lose considerably less than I have estimated.

On October 14 it was decided to recall Sir Ian Hamilton and to send out in his place General Monro, an officer who had already commanded an army in France and was deeply imbued with Western ideas. He belonged to that school whose supreme conception of Great War strategy was 'killing Germans.' Anything that killed Germans was right. Anything that did not kill Germans was useless, even if it made other people kill them, and kill more of them, or terminated their power to kill

[1] 'Gallipoli Diary,' page 249.

us. To such minds the capture of Constantinople was an idle trophy, and the destruction of Turkey as a military factor, or the rallying of the Balkan States to the Allies, mere politics, which every military man should hold in proper scorn. The special outlook of General Monro was not known to the Cabinet. His instructions were moreover exclusively military. He was to express an opinion whether the Gallipoli Peninsula should be evacuated, or another attempt made to carry it; and on the number of troops that would be required (1) to carry the Peninsula, (2) to keep the Straits open, and (3) to take Constantinople.[1] No reference was made to any part which might be played by the Fleet in this essentially amphibious operation. Very large masses of troops were now moving from France to the Eastern theatre, and the whole question of their employment was left open. In these circumstances General Monro's report was awaited with the utmost anxiety.

There was however no need for suspense. General Monro was an officer of swift decision. He came, he saw, he capitulated. He reached the Dardanelles on October 28; and already on the 29th he and his staff were discussing nothing but evacuation. On the 30th he landed on the Peninsula. Without going beyond the Beaches, he familiarised himself in the space of six hours with the conditions prevailing on the 15-mile front of Anzac, Suvla and Helles, and spoke a few discouraging words to the principal officers at each point. To the Divisional Commanders summoned to meet him at their respective Corps Headquarters, he put separately and in turn a question in the following sense: 'On the supposition that you are going to get no more drafts can you maintain your position in spite of the arrival of strong reinforcements with heavy guns and limitless German ammunition?' He thus collected a number of dubious answers, armed with which he returned to Imbros. He never again set foot on the Peninsula during the tenure of his command. His Chief-of-the-Staff, also an enthusiast

[1] General Sir C. C. Monro's Despatch, *London Gazette*.

for evacuation, never visited it at all. On October 31 General Monro despatched his telegram recommending the total evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the final abandonment of the campaign. According to his own statements he contemplated, in addition to the ruin of the whole enterprise, a loss of from thirty to forty per cent. of the Army, i.e., about forty thousand officers and men. This he was prepared to accept. Two days later he left for Egypt, leaving the command of the Dardanelles Army temporarily in the hands of General Birdwood.

General Monro's telegram of 'Evacuation' fell like a thunderbolt upon Lord Kitchener; and for the moment and under the shock he rose in all the strength which he commanded when he represented the indomitable core of our national character.

Lord Kitchener to General Birdwood.

November 3, 1915.

Very secret.

You know the report sent in by Monro. I shall come out to you; am leaving to-morrow night. I have seen Captain Keyes, and I believe the Admiralty will agree to making naval attempt to force the passage of the Straits. We must do what we can to assist them, and I think that as soon as our ships are in the Sea of Marmora we should seize the Bulair isthmus and hold it so as to supply the Navy if the Turks still hold out.

Examine very carefully the best position for landing near the marsh at the head of the Gulf of Xeros, so that we could get a line across the isthmus, with ships at both sides. In order to find the troops for this undertaking we should have to reduce the numbers in the trenches to the lowest possible, and perhaps evacuate positions at Suvla. All the best fighting men that could be spared, including your boys from Anzac and every one I can sweep up in Egypt, might be concentrated at Mudros ready for this enterprise.

There will probably be a change in the naval command, Wemyss being appointed in command to carry through the naval part of the work.

As regards the military command, you would have the

whole force, and should carefully select your commanders and troops. I would suggest Maude, Fanshawe, Marshall, Peyton, Godley, Cox, leaving others to hold the lines. Please work out plans for this, or alternative plans as you may think best. We must do it right this time.

I absolutely refuse to sign orders for evacuation, which I think would be the gravest disaster and would condemn a large percentage of our men to death or imprisonment.

Monro will be appointed to the command of the Salonika force.

Here was the true Kitchener. Here in this flaming telegram —whether Bulair was the best place or not—was the Man the British Empire believed him to be, in whom millions set their faith—resolute, self-reliant, creative, lion-hearted.

Unhappily the next day:—

Lord Kitchener to General Birdwood.

November 4, 1915.

I am coming as arranged. . . . The more I look at the problem the less I see my way through, so you had better work out very quietly and secretly any scheme for getting the troops off the peninsula.

* * * * *

We may now once again exercise our privilege of crossing to the enemy's lines and of learning how the situation was viewed by the responsible German authorities. On the same October 31 that General Monro despatched his telegram of evacuation to Lord Kitchener, Admiral von Usedom who, it will be remembered, commanded the fortress of the Dardanelles and all the marine defences of the Straits, completed a despatch to the Emperor dealing with the events of the past month.

'The great attack,' he wrote, 'which we have been expecting on the land front has not taken place since the advance inaugurated by the new landing on August 7 north of the Ari-

burnu front was brought to a standstill. At the end of September reports of moves of troops and vehicles increased. Information from Salonika confirms that troops are being drawn thither from the Dardanelles front. I do not, however, consider it probable that the enemy will evacuate his position without hard fighting. In order to drive him out a very thorough artillery preparation is necessary, and for this the munitions on the spot or which can be brought up are insufficient.'

He proceeded to dwell upon the dangerous manner in which the fortress defences of the Straits had been weakened through the repeated withdrawals of the mobile artillery, particularly the howitzers, on which his whole system depended. In addition to the forty-nine howitzers and mobile guns with their supplies of ammunition withdrawn in May and June, he had during August and September been forced to cede another twenty-one of his most valuable howitzers and mobile guns. The whole of the vital Intermediate Defences of the forts contained at this time only twenty mobile howitzers and mortars. To quote Admiral von Usedom:—

Owing to the transfer of the eight 6-inch howitzers and three 8·2-inch mortars, there remained only in fortress 'D' of high-angled guns the following:—

(1)	On the European side:	One 6-inch howitzer battery of four howitzers.
		No mortar batteries.
(2)	On the Asiatic coast:	Three 6-inch howitzer batteries, each of four howitzers.
		One 8·4-inch howitzer battery of six mortars.

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Meanwhile Commodore Keyes, Chief of the Staff to Admiral de Robeck, could endure the position at the Dardanelles no longer. He had been throughout convinced that the Fleet could at any time with proper preparation force the Darda-

nelles and enter the Marmora in sufficient strength. During the summer detailed plans for this operation were prepared under his direction by the Naval Staff. These plans were now completed, and Commodore Keyes declared himself confident of their success. In this opinion he was most strongly supported by Rear-Admiral Wemyss. This officer was actually senior to Admiral de Robeck, but in circumstances which have already been explained[1] he had accepted the position of Second-in-Command upon the eve of the action of March 18. The qualities of character and judgment which he displayed during the war were destined to raise him from a Rear-Admiral to the position of First Sea Lord. In this supreme capacity he was eventually to sustain the burden of the last fourteen months of the struggle. His opinion therefore is retrospectively invested with very high authority. The joint representations of the Chief of Staff and of his Second-in-Command were not, however, acceptable to Admiral de Robeck. Commodore Keyes thereupon asked to be relieved of his appointment in order that he might return home and lay his plans before the Board of Admiralty. Admiral de Robeck, with a magnanimous gesture, asked him to retain his position and accorded him leave of absence, full liberty and 'a fair field' to state his case, making it clear, however, that he could not himself in any circumstances become responsible for a further naval attempt. Commodore Keyes therefore repaired to London forthwith, where he arrived on October 28.

The Keyes plan was remarkable for its audacity. It discarded all the gradual methods around which it had alone been possible hitherto to rally naval opinion. The Fleet would be divided into four squadrons, three of which were to take part in the attack, while the fourth provided the support for the Army. The Second Squadron comprised about eight old battleships and cruisers, four very old battleships acting as supply ships, as many of the dummy battleships as possible,

[1] See page 223.

and a number of merchantmen carrying coal and ammunition. All these vessels were to be fitted with mine-bumpers. Preceded by four of the best sweepers and accompanied by eight destroyers and two scouts, this Second Squadron was to enter the Straits shortly before dawn, keeping below the illuminated area until dawn was about to break, when it would proceed to steam through the Narrows at its utmost speed. Commodore Keyes proposed to take command of this squadron himself. It was his firm conviction that with the improved sweepers and the mine-bumpers, and aided by smoke screens, darkness and surprise, certainly more than half of this squadron would arrive above Nagara. The battleships which survived were immediately to attack the forts of the Narrows from their rear, which would have been completely exposed.

Meanwhile at dawn the First Squadron, composed of the *Lord Nelson*, *Agamemnon*, *Exmouth*, two *King Edwards*, four French ships, the *Glory* and the *Canopus*, accompanied by eight sloops and ten destroyers for sweeping, would simultaneously attack the forts at the Narrows from below the Kephez minefield. The Third Squadron, consisting of two monitors, the *Swiftsure*, and five cruisers or light cruisers, was to cover the Army and co-operate from across the Peninsula in the attack upon the forts at the Narrows. The bombardment of the forts at the Narrows by all three squadrons, and the sweeping of the minefields already deranged by the passage of the Second Squadron, were to be pursued continuously without slackening for a moment. An elaborate memorandum had been prepared by the staff, regulating every phase of this main attack which might well have been continued for two or even three days if necessary before the final advance of the First Squadron through the Narrows was ordered. In short, the Keyes plan was in principle the old plan of pinning down the forts in close and continuous action while the minefields were swept, but in addition it was to be preceded by a furious surprise rush of the oldest vessels to dislocate the defence, to

sweep and break up the minefields and secure positions whence the forts could be taken in reverse. 'The action recommended (in the staff memorandum),' wrote Commodore Keyes, 'taken in conjunction with the preliminary rush and determined military offensive, generally represents the views of a number of experienced officers who strongly advocate a naval attack on the Straits and are confident of success. If success is achieved, the Turkish Army in Gallipoli will be entirely dependent on the Bulair Isthmus for supplies. This line of communication can be harassed day and night.' Finally the plan comprised detailed arrangements for maintaining the successful ships in the Marmora while they were operating against the Turkish communications.

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On November 2 the Prime Minister reconstituted the War Council or Dardanelles Committee as it had hitherto been styled. In its new form it was called the 'War Committee' and was limited to the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, Lord Kitchener, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Bonar Law was added ten days later under Conservative pressure. I was excluded. It was announced that this Committee would be responsible to the Cabinet for the whole direction of the war. On November 3 the new Committee met to consider the question of evacuating the Dardanelles. Lord Kitchener's views have been fully exposed in his telegram to General Birdwood of that day. He had previously telegraphed to General Monro asking whether his opinions were shared by the Corps Commanders on the Peninsula. He had been answered that General Byng favoured evacuation and considered that Suvla could be evacuated without much loss, provided the attempt were made before German reinforcements arrived; that General Davies, commanding at Helles, concurred with General Monro; but that General Birdwood at Anzac was opposed to evacuation. General Maxwell, com-

manding in Egypt, had also independently telegraphed urging that a further effort should be made to hold on. Thus the military opinions were divided. The Committee had also before them the plans of Commodore Keyes, endorsed by Admiral Wemyss, in regard to which the Admiralty War Staff had pronounced no decided opinion. Keyes was still only a Captain with the rank of Commodore. He was known as a daring and gifted officer, but he had no record of high command behind him, and he did not carry the authority necessary to override Admiral de Robeck's negative view. Could he at this juncture, with the fame of the leader of the Dover patrol, have laid upon the Council Table the credentials of Zeebrugge, the history of the Great War might have been much curtailed.

In the circumstances which existed the new War Committee found no difficulty in deciding to postpone the evil day of decision. Lord Kitchener proceeded to the Dardanelles to survey the situation on the spot and make further recommendations. The Secretary of State left London on November 4, apparently in great sympathy with Commodore Keyes's plan. He spoke on his way through Paris in an exceedingly resolute manner, and directed Commodore Keyes to explain the scheme to the French Minister of Marine, now Admiral Lacaze, and then follow him with all speed. Admiral Lacaze was wholly favourable to the plan, and immediately promised a reinforcement of six old French battleships to execute it.

Lord Kitchener arrived at the Dardanelles on November 9. His personal inspection of the troops and the defences convinced him that the troops could hold their positions unless confronted with very heavy German reinforcements of which there was no immediate prospect. His conferences with Admiral de Robeck led him however, in the absence of Commodore Keyes, to discard the idea of a renewed naval attempt. Instead he devised a plan for a new landing at Ayas in the Gulf of Alexandretta, with the double object of barring the path of a Turkish invasion of Egypt and of covering the effects of an

impending withdrawal from Gallipoli. This plan did not commend itself either to the Admiralty or to the War Committee. With Salonika as well as the Dardanelles on their hands, they were naturally reluctant to commit themselves to another new and entirely separate enterprise which could at the best only achieve subsidiary objects. They therefore informed Lord Kitchener of their dissent from his views and announced that they had decided that the final decision about Gallipoli was to be relegated to a Conference to be held in Paris a few days later.

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In accepting an office in the new Government after leaving the Admiralty at the end of May, I had been actuated by the feeling that it was my duty to sustain the Dardanelles enterprise to the best of my ability, and by the hope that with a seat on the War Council I should be able to do so. It was on this condition alone that I had found it possible to occupy a sinecure office. That condition had now disappeared. I was out of harmony with the views which were prevailing and to which the Prime Minister had at last submitted. I was also distressed at the methods of indecision arising from conflicting opinions which at this time pervaded and paralysed the conduct of the war. The rejection of the plans of Commodore Keyes and Admiral Wemyss filled me with despair. I was convinced that the evacuation of Gallipoli was intended and must follow as a consequence of what had taken place.

Awful as were the risks of this decision, it was inevitable unless further efforts on a great scale were to be made by sea or land. Even evacuation was better than leaving the Army to moulder piecemeal without support or purpose. If a British Cabinet or Admiralty were unable to face the responsibility of a naval attempt, there was still time for further military efforts. The important new armies gathering in the Near East, in Egypt and at Salonika, could have been landed at Besika Bay to advance along the Asiatic shore, or alternatively at some

point in the Gulf of Xeros to cut the Isthmus of Bulair. Both these operations would have required a large number of additional small vessels—trawlers, lighters, beetles, etc.—but either could have been carried out before the position of the Allied Army holding the Gallipoli Peninsula became untenable through the arrival of great supplies of German artillery and ammunition. In neither case had the Turks sufficient reserves available to meet the new invasion. In both cases victory would have carried with it the destruction or capture of the whole Turkish Army of twenty divisions now concentrated on the Gallipoli Peninsula and the consequent liberation as a new factor of our own fourteen divisions. Bulgaria had joined our enemies; Serbia was overrun. But Greece and Roumania could still have been gained; Constantinople could still have been taken; communications could still have been reopened with Russia; and Turkey would have been driven out of Europe, if not indeed altogether out of the war.

But it would have been useless to advocate such a policy in the teeth of the opinions which were now prevailing, even had I been accorded a seat on the War Committee. It was better that other schemes of strategic and political thought now dominant should have their chance and be applied in their integrity by those who believed in them. I knew too much and felt too keenly to be able to accept Cabinet responsibility for what I believed to be a wholly erroneous conception of war. I therefore in the middle of November sought permission to retire from the Government.

It was imposible at that time to discuss in Parliament any of the grave and tormenting controversies which these pages expose. I had nothing but the friendliest personal feelings towards my colleagues and the Prime Minister, and I would not speak a word which might add to their difficulties or those of the State. I was content to base myself upon a desire to relinquish a well-paid sinecure office which I could not bear longer to hold at this sad juncture in our affairs.

I have tried to show what I believe to be the interplay of forces and sequence of events in this tragedy. Masses of documents can be produced which illustrate and elaborate all the phases of the story, and there are many minor episodes which it would have been only confusing to include. But from what has been written, the appalling difficulties and cruel embarrassments of those who, whatever their views, were endeavouring loyally and earnestly to discharge their great responsibilities can be readily understood. I have recorded my counsels at the time. The future was then unknown. No one possessed plenary power. The experts were frequently wrong. The politicians were frequently right. The wishes of foreign Governments, themselves convulsed internally by difficulties the counterpart of our own, were constantly thrusting themselves athwart our policy. Without the title deeds of positive achievement no one had the power to give clear brutal orders which would command unquestioning respect. Power was widely disseminated among the many important personages who in this period formed the governing instrument. Knowledge was very unequally shared. Innumerable arguments of a partial character could be quoted on every side of all these complicated questions. The situation itself was in constant and violent movement. We never at any time regained the initiative; we were always compelled to adapt ourselves to events. We could never overtake or forestall them. All the time, clear and simple solutions existed which would speedily have produced the precious element of victory.

I may perhaps close this chapter by reprinting some words of general import which I used in explaining my resignation to the House of Commons:—

There is no reason to be discouraged about the progress of the war. We are passing through a bad time now, and it will probably be worse before it is better, but that it will be better, if we only endure and persevere, I have no doubt whatever. The old wars were decided by their episodes rather than by

their tendencies. In this war the tendencies are far more important than the episodes. Without winning any sensational victories we may win this war. We may win it even during a continuance of extremely disappointing and vexatious events. It is not necessary for us in order to win the war to push the German lines back over all the territory they have absorbed, or to pierce them. While the German lines extend far beyond her frontiers, and while her flag flies over conquered capitals and subjugated provinces, while all the appearances of military success attend her arms, Germany may be defeated more fatally in the second or third year of the war than if the Allied Armies had entered Berlin in the first.

. . . It is, no doubt, disconcerting for us to observe that the Government of a State like Bulgaria are convinced on an impartial survey of the chances that victory will rest with the Central Powers. All the small States are hypnotised by German military pomp and precision. They see the glitter, the episode, but they do not see or realise the capacity of the ancient and mighty nations, against whom Germany is warring, to endure adversity, to put up with disappointments and mismanagement, to recreate and renew their strength, and to pass on with boundless obstinacy through boundless sufferings to thc achievement of their cause.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CONSEQUENCES OF 1915

A Reflection—Final Stages at Gallipoli—Admiral Wemyss's Effort—Straits of the Turks—Final Decision to Evacuate—Admiral Wemyss's Telegram of December 8—Final Admiralty Veto—The Evacuation—Consequences—The Revival of Turkey—Dissipation of Allied Forces—Russia—Roumania—Two Schools of Naval Thought—A Period of Naval Inertia—The Awakening—The Defensive Spirit—The War of Exhaustion—The Chain of Fate.

THE closing scenes at the Dardanelles proceeded while I was serving with the 2d Battalion of the Grenadier Guards near Laventie. I was not without information on the course of affairs from my friends both in the Cabinet and at General Headquarters. It was a comfort to be with these fine troops at such a time, to study their methods, unsurpassed in the Army, of discipline and trench warfare, and to share from day to day their life under the hard conditions of the winter and the fire of the enemy. The kindness with which I was received during my period of instruction with the Guards Division will ever be gratefully remembered by me. As in the shades of a November evening, I for the first time led a platoon of Grenadiers across the sopping fields which gave access to our trenches, while here and there the bright flashes of the guns or the occasional whistle of a random bullet accompanied our path, the conviction came into my mind with absolute assurance that the simple soldiers and their regimental officers, armed with their cause, would by their virtues in the end retrieve the mistakes and ignorances of Staffs and Cabinets, of Admirals, Generals and politicians—including, no doubt, many of my own. But, alas, at what a needless cost! To how many slaughters, through what endless months of fortitude

and privation would these men, themselves already the survivors of many a bloody day, be made to plod before victory was won!

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On November 22, Lord Kitchener, his Ayas bay project being vetoed, consented to the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac. He still hoped to save Helles, the retention of which was strongly advocated by Admiral de Robeck. The War Committee, however, decided that all three lodgments should be abandoned. With this decision Admiral de Robeck expressed himself in disaccord. He deprecated the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac, and when asked specifically on November 25 if he concurred in the evacuation of Helles, he observed bluntly that 'he could not understand it.' The situation cannot, however, be disentangled from his attitude towards the use of the Fleet. His health was now temporarily impaired by his long spell of hard work. He started immediately for home on a period of leave.

The command now devolved upon Admiral Wemyss. The new Naval Commander-in-Chief, undeterred by past events, bent himself to a last effort to retrieve the situation. In a series of telegrams, he emphasised the dangers of a winter evacuation. He dwelt upon its difficulties; he endorsed the estimate of General Monro that 30 per cent. of the force would be lost in evacuation; he urged that one more effort should be made to convert defeat into victory. In a spirit which cannot be censured in the Royal Navy, he asserted that the Fleet would do its part, and that even if the Army could not co-operate, he would carry out the Keyes plan and force the Dardanelles by naval power alone.

These stalwart counsels threw everything again into the melting pot. The Cabinet revolted against the decision of their new War Committee. It was resolved that no decision could be taken without a further conference with the French, and a meeting of the new Allied Standing Council was fixed

for December 5 at Calais. Lord Kitchener again took heart. In common with the British General Staff he was strongly opposed to the whole Salonika expedition. On December 2 he telegraphed to General Monro:—

Private and Secret.

The Cabinet has been considering the Gallipoli situation all day. Owing to the political consequences, there is a strong feeling against evacuation, even of a partial character. It is the general opinion we should retain Cape Helles.

If the Salonika troops are placed at your disposal up to four divisions for an offensive operation to improve the position at Suvla, could such operations be carried out in time with a view to making Suvla retainable, by obtaining higher position and greater depth. The Navy will also take the offensive in co-operation.

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Meanwhile the activities of the British submarines in the Marmora had almost entirely severed the sea communications of the Turkish Army, and were also impeding their supply by the roads along the Marmora shore. To meet this peril, which had been approaching plainly, steadily and rapidly during the last two or three months, the German Staff had built a new branch railway from the main Turkish system to Kavak at the head of the Gulf of Xeros. This had been finished in the nick of time, and as the sea transport failed, it became the sole line of supply, relief or reinforcement for the twenty Turkish divisions on the Peninsula. From the new railhead at Kavak all transport was by bullock waggon or camel along roads across the Bulair Isthmus which were frequently disturbed by the fire of the Fleet. On December 2, Admiral Wemyss succeeded in destroying the three central spans of the Kavak Bridge by fire from the *Agamemnon*, *Endymion*, and a Monitor. The road was also so badly broken by the bombardment that wheeled traffic was completely interrupted. The Turkish 5th Army was now in serious straits.

The British Intelligence reported growing demoralisation of the enemy through losses, disease, stringency of supplies, the severe weather, and the increasingly searching character of the naval fire. We now know that these reports were correct. Food, clothes, boots, ammunition were frightfully scarce. The condition of the Turkish soldiers, often bare-footed, ragged, hungry, clinging to their trenches week after week, excited at this time the sympathy as well as the alarm of their German masters. Count Metternich, then German Ambassador at Constantinople, visited the Turkish lines on the Peninsula in December in company with Liman von Sanders. 'If you had only known,' he said, discussing these events after the war, 'what the state of the Turkish Army was, it would have gone hard with us.' It was not, however, knowledge that was lacking, but the collective will-power to turn it to account.

Admiral Wemyss and his staff were now confident that they had the power, even without forcing the Straits, not only to prevent the arrival of German artillery reinforcements on a large scale, but also gravely to compromise the existence of the whole Turkish Army on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Thus on the spot hope flared up again. It was at this moment, when for the first time a strong and competent naval command declared itself positive of success, that the improvident decision to evacuate was finally taken. On December 8 the Joint Staff Conference sitting at the French General Headquarters declared unanimously for the immediate organisation of the defence of Salonika and for the immediate evacuation of Gallipoli. From this moment the perplexities of the British Government came to an end. Henceforward they remained steadfast in pusillanimous resolve. Admiral Wemyss, however, with Keyes at his side, did not readily yield; and the struggle of these two sailors against the now marshalled force of the Cabinet, the War Committee, the Joint Anglo-French Conference, the Admiralty and the War Office, constitutes an episode on which perhaps in future years British naval his-

torians will be glad to dwell. His telegram of December 8 at least must in justice to the Royal Navy be reprinted here:—

The Navy is prepared to force the Straits and control them for an indefinite period, cutting off all Turkish supplies which now find their way to the Peninsula either by sea from the Marmora or across the Dardanelles from Asiatic to European shore. The only line of communications left would be the road along the Isthmus of Bulair, which can be controlled almost entirely from the Sea of Marmora and the Gulf of Xeros. What is offered the Army, therefore, is the practical, complete severance of all Turkish lines of communication, accompanied by the destruction of the large supply depots on the shore of the Dardanelles.

In the first instance I strongly advocated that the naval attack should synchronise with an army offensive, and if the Army will be prepared to attack in the event of a favourable opportunity presenting itself, nothing more need be required of them. The Navy here is prepared to undertake this operation with every assurance of success. If the units as described in your letter of November 24 can be provided, these hopes of success are greatly increased, and the possible losses greatly diminished.

The unanimous military opinion referred to in Admiralty telegram No. 422, has, I feel certain, been greatly influenced, and naturally so, by the military appreciations of Sir Charles Monro. These I have not seen, but their purport I have gathered in course of conversations. The Corps Commanders, I know, view the evacuation with the greatest misgiving. The forcing of the Dardanelles, as outlined in my telegrams, has never been put before them, and I am convinced that, after considering the certain results which would follow a naval success, they would favour an attack on the lines indicated, especially in view of the undoubted low morale of the Turkish Peninsular army, of which we have ample evidence.

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The very extensive German propaganda being pursued all over the Near East, accompanied by the expenditure of vast sums of money, is not, I feel convinced, being undertaken merely as a side issue to the European war.

A position of stalemate on both fronts of the principal theatres of war appears the natural outcome of present situation. This opinion is freely expressed in the higher military circles in Greece, and would therefore appear to be fostered by the Germans—a significant point.

By surrendering our position here, when within sight of victory, we are aiding enemy to obtain markets the possession of which may enable her to outlast the Allies in the war of exhaustion now commencing.

A successful attack would once and for all disperse those clouds of doubt, a large amount of shipping would be released, and the question of Greece and Egypt settled.

I do not know what has been decided about Constantinople, but if the Turks could be told that we were in the Marmora to prevent its occupation by the Germans, such a course would inevitably lead to disruption, and therefore weakness amongst them.

I fear the effect on the Navy would be bad.

Although no word of attack has passed my lips except to my immediate staff and admirals, I feel sure that every officer and man would feel that the campaign had been abandoned without sufficient use having been made of our greatest force, viz., the Navy.

The position is so critical that there is no time for standing on ceremony, and I suggest that General Birdwood, the officer who would now have to carry out the attack or evacuation which is now ordered, be asked for his appreciation.

The logical conclusion, therefore, is the choice of evacuation or forcing the Straits. I consider the former disastrous tactically and strategically, and the latter feasible, and, so long as troops remain at Anzac, decisive.

I am convinced that the time is ripe for a vigorous offensive, and I am confident of success.

On August 18 the Admiralty had telegraphed to Admiral de Robeck authorising and implicitly urging him to use the old battleships of the Fleet to force the Dardanelles, and Admiral de Robeck had declined. When the Admiralty was willing the Admiral was unwilling. Now the conditions were reversed. On December 10 the same Board of Admiralty replied that

they were not prepared to authorise the attempt by the Navy single-handed to force the Narrows. This sombre veto was final.

The risks that men are prepared to run in relation to circumstances present some of the strangest manifestations of psychology. One tithe of the hardihood they display to escape disaster, would often certainly achieve success. Contrast, for instance, the alternative hazards now presented to the British Government and Admiralty: on the one hand, the chance, even the probability according to all expert opinion, of losing 40,000 men in an evacuation, which if successful could only result in the total loss of the campaign; on the other, the chance of losing a squadron of old ships, and a small number of men in an operation, which if successful would carry the campaign at a stroke from disaster to triumph. Yet we see Cabinet and Admiralty able to face the first alternative, and shrink from the second. While time is young, while prospects are favourable, while prizes inestimable may be gained, caution, hesitancy, half measures rule and fetter action. The grim afternoon of adverse struggle alone brings the hour of desperate resolve. The hopeful positive is rejected while all may be gained; the awful negative is embraced when nought but escape remains in view; and the energy and conviction which might have commanded victory are lavished upon the mere processes of flight.

The determination of the British Government to give in at all costs was now inflexible. The orders for the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac were reiterated by the Admiralty. On December 12, Admiral Wemyss bowed to these orders 'with the greatest regret and misgiving.' The plan for the evacuation, upon which a month's careful labour had been expended, was now completed, and the Admiral fixed the night of December 19 or 20 as the date of the operation.

Hope died hard. In ordering the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac the Government had consented to the retention for

the time being of Helles which, while it was held, kept open the possibility of a renewed naval attack. In order to make Helles secure, the Admiral, in full accord with General Davies, commanding at Helles, elaborated plans for a combined attack by the Fleet and Army upon Achi Baba. The control and direction of the naval fire from the monitors and the bulged *Edgars* had now been brought to a very high degree of efficiency. 'Co-operation in an attack,' wrote General Davies, 'has now become a practical reality.' Both the naval and military Commanders on the spot were therefore in complete agreement. It is not necessary to pronounce upon the prospects of such an operation, for at this moment General Monro returned from Salonika where after his one day's visit to the Peninsula and his sojourn in Egypt he had been residing. Already on December 1 he had forbidden General Birdwood and the Corps Commanders to confer with the Admiral without his permission. On the 10th he peremptorily forbade General Birdwood to discuss any military matter with the Admiral. On the 14th he telegraphed home dissociating himself from the Admiral's views and protesting against any expression of opinion by Admiral Wemyss upon military matters. He agreed, however, with the naval and local military view that Helles could not be held indefinitely without Achi Baba. Thus at last, since the capture of Achi Baba was deemed impossible, the decision was reached for the total evacuation of the Peninsula.

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It was with melancholy but intense relief that I learned in France of the successful and bloodless execution of this critical operation which was accomplished on the night of December 19. The utmost credit belongs to the naval and military officers who perfected in exact detail the arrangements, and to the Admirals and Generals by whom they were so successfully carried out. The weather, on which all depended, was favour-

able for exactly the vital forty-eight hours, and the Turks were utterly unsuspecting. Indeed, when dawn broke on empty trenches and famous positions, bought at so terrible a cost, now silent as the graves with which they were surrounded, the haggard Turkish soldiers and their undaunted chiefs could hardly believe their eyes. Their position, and that of their country whose capital they had defended with soldierly tenacity, were now translated at a stroke from extreme jeopardy into renewed and resuscitated power. Conviction, determination and the will to win, steadfastly maintained by their High Command, had brought victory to the defence in spite of their inferiority in numbers and in resources of all kinds and of the inherent strategic perils of their position. The lack of these qualities on our side at the summit of power had defrauded the attackers of the reward, pregnant in its consequences to the whole world, to which their overwhelming potential strength and resources, their actual numbers and apparatus, their daring, their devotion and their fearful sacrifices had given them the right.

The evacuation of Helles was performed with equal skill and with equal good fortune on January 8, and the story of the Dardanelles came finally to an end. This consummation was acclaimed by the shallow and the uninstructed as if it had been a victory.

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It is necessary, however, in the closing pages of this volume not only to relate the immediate sequel, but to outline the vast consequences which flowed from these events.

The campaign of the Dardanelles had been starved and crippled at every stage by the continued opposition of the French and British High Commands in France to the withdrawal of troops and munitions from the main theatre of the war. The abandonment of the Dardanelles led to the diversion of the Allied military forces on a scale far larger than its most ardent advocates had ever contemplated. Serbia had been destroyed;

Bulgaria had joined our enemies; Roumania and Greece lay frozen in a terrorised neutrality. But still, as long as the British flag flew on the Peninsula and the British Fleet lay off the Straits, the main power of Turkey was gripped and paralysed. The evacuation set free twenty Turkish divisions on the Peninsula, and Turkey henceforth was able to form a common front with the Bulgarians in Thrace, to attack Russia, to aid Austria, to overawe Roumania. Turkey was also placed in a position simultaneously to threaten Egypt and to reinforce Mesopotamia. The thirteen evacuated British divisions,[1] having been rested and refitted, were required to guard against the last two of these new dangers. The whole of the new army sent by France and Britain from the French theatre, amounting to seven additional divisions, was assigned to the defence of Salonika. Apart from the Anzacs, scarcely any of these twenty divisions of Allied troops ever fought against the Germans during the rest of the war. Scarcely one came into any direct contact with any enemy for nearly six months, and during the same period thirteen out of the twenty liberated Turkish divisions were added to the hostile strength in other theatres. Eleven went to the Caucasus and two to Galicia, in both cases adding to the burden which Russia had to bear. Thus the first fruits of the evacuation of Gallipoli may be variously computed at a total loss of strength to the Allies of from thirty to forty divisions, half the Army of a first-class power. It was evident that a very grave prolongation of the war must arise from this cause alone.

From the moment when the grip on the heart of the Turkish Empire was relaxed, and breathing space was given, its widespread limbs under German stimulation regained and developed their power. The three campaigns which had either begun or were imminent from Salonika, from Egypt, or in Mesopotamia, all grew rapidly into very great undertakings, and all continued until the last day of the war to make enor-

[1] The French Corps had already gone.

mous drains upon the British resources and, to a lesser degree, upon those of France. By 1918 seven British and Indian divisions, composing an army of two hundred and seventy thousand men (exclusive of followers), were operating in Mesopotamia. The defence of the Suez Canal and subsequently the attack upon Turkey by the invasion of Palestine grew into a separate war which in any other period would have absorbed the attention of the world. Instead of thrusting at Constantinople, the heart of Turkey, or striking at her arm-pit at Alexandretta, or her elbow at Haifa, we began our attack from her finger-tips upward. Slowly, painfully, with infinite exertion and expense, and by astonishing feats of arms and organisation, we made our way across the deserts drawing artificial rivers with us through hundreds of miles of scorching sand. We toiled and fought our way mile by mile, and even yard by yard, from Gaza to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Damascus, never at any moment exacting from the enemy more than one-third of our own war effort. At the Armistice twelve British divisions, composing an army of nearly two hundred and eighty thousand men (exclusive of followers), were engaged in Palestine and Syria. The campaign from Salonika expanded not less formidably. At the end of 1917 twelve British and French divisions and two Italian divisions were in line against Turkish forces which perseverance at the Dardanelles might long ago have forced out of the war, and against the Bulgarian Army which a timely and prudent policy might have ranged upon our side. The sole addition gained by this great deployment of Allied force was six Serbian divisions brought by sea from the wreck of their country and four Greek divisions raised by Monsieur Venizelos after his revolt against King Constantine. In the end six hundred and thirty thousand Allied soldiers stood on the Salonika front.

The maintenance of these three great expeditions over long distances of sea threw a strain upon the maritime resources of Great Britain which, combined with the unlimited 'U-boat'

warfare, came near to compassing our complete ruin in the spring of 1917. Thus the Admirals who thought only of the Grand Fleet and the Generals who thought only of the Main Army may learn how cruel are the revenges which Fortune wreaks upon those who disdain her first and golden offerings.

Wasteful and roundabout as was the method, the strategic conceptions which inspired the Eastern policy were vindicated in the end; and the collapse of Bulgaria after three years' war was the signal for the general catastrophe of the Central Powers.

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There ended with the Dardanelles all hope of forming direct and continuous contact with Russia. A railway 1,200 miles long might be built to Murmansk; Vladivostok might continue to pass supplies across a distance of 4,000 miles; but the intimate co-operation in men and munitions, the vast exportation of South Russian wheat, the expansion of a vitalising trade, which could alone spring from the opening of the Black Sea, was for ever denied us.

The abandonment of Gallipoli dispelled the Russian dream. In her darkest hours, under the flail of Ludendorff, driven out of Poland, driven out of Galicia, her armies enduring disaster and facing death often without arms, the cost of living rising continually throughout her vast, secluded Empire, Russia had cheered herself by dwelling on the great prize of Constantinople. A profound chill spread through all ranks of the Russian people, and with it came suspicion no less deep-seated. England had not really tried to force the Straits. From the moment when she had conceded the Russian claim to Constantinople, she had not been single-hearted, she had lost her interest in the enterprise. Her infirm action and divided counsels arose from secret motives hidden in the bosom of the State. And this while Russia was pouring out her blood as no race had ever done since men waged war. Such were the whispers which, winged by skilful German propaganda, spread far and

wide through the Tsar's dominions, and in their wake every subversive influence gained in power. Lastly, the now inevitable prolongation of the struggle was destined to prove fatal to Russia. In the war of exhaustion to which we were finally condemned, which was indeed extolled as the last revelation of military wisdom, Russia was to be the first to fall, and in her fall to open upon herself a tide of ruin in which perhaps a score of millions of human beings have been engulfed. The consequences of these events abide with us to-day. They will darken the world for our children's children.

Another disaster supreme in its character was escaped by the breadth of a hair. It was only by the margin of a few weeks in 1917 that the German decision to begin the unlimited 'U-boat' warfare anticipated the Russian collapse. Had the Russian revolution broken out earlier, the desperate folly of quarrelling with America would never have been perpetrated by the German Government, and while Russia would inevitably have fallen, no ground would have been afforded to the United States to enter the war.

* * * * *

Compared to these gigantic issues the fate of Roumania was but an incident. Yet that fate at the end of 1916, cruel and heart-rending in every circumstance, was the direct outcome of the failure to force the Dardanelles. This small country was at length in the autumn of 1916 persuaded to enter the war while still completely cut off from the Western Allies. Caught in the combined grip of German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Turkish troops, she was crushed with astonishing celerity; and, her armies broken, her capital pillaged, her entire territory subjugated, her Government driven on to foreign soil, she was forced into a separate Peace of the most merciless character.

* * * * *

In its naval aspects the story of the Dardanelles illuminates the two different schools of thought which existed throughout

the whole war at the Admiralty and in the Fleet. The first considered in the main that the war was the business of the Army; the task of the Royal Navy was to carry the Army wherever they wanted to go, to keep open the sea communications, and to be ready in overwhelming strength to fight the enemy's main Fleet should it ever accord them an opportunity. The type of officer who adhered to these respectable views was naturally led to urge the unceasing and increasing construction of ships of all kinds for the Grand Fleet and for attendance upon it. They also steadfastly advocated the accumulation of material of every kind, raising continually their standards of reserves and piling up enormous quantities of ammunition which they husbanded so jealously that it was nearly all left unexpended at the Armistice. Not less naturally they viewed with extreme apprehension the loss even of the oldest ships, for these, if all the new ones were destroyed, might come in useful. Above all, they objected to any ship being risked except in contact with an enemy ship. As the enemy ships scarcely ever put to sea, adherence to these doctrines tended to confine the Navy to the sphere occupied by the great services of supply and transport which sustained the fronts of armies and in that vital function exhibited so many worthy qualities.

The opposite view was that the Navy was a gigantic instrument of offensive war, capable of intervening with decisive effect in the general strategy, and that it must bear its share of the risks and sufferings of the struggle. The Grand Fleet must, of course, be maintained in an absolutely assured superiority to the maximum forces of the enemy; but even the vital units of the Grand Fleet must be used in battle and on great occasions, with audacity and with a fierce desire to engage the enemy and turn to advantage the awful hazards of war. As to vessels surplus to the ample but strict numerical requirements of the Grand Fleet, we have seen what may be called the 'Forward School' use them, or wish to use them—aye, and

lead them—with a cold and calculated ruthlessness of consequences and furious refusal to be denied success never surpassed in naval annals. It was in this spirit that Beatty broke into the Heligoland Bight on August 28, 1914, pressed his pursuit of von Hipper on January 24, and led the battle-cruisers and the fast division at Jutland. Contrast his attitude of mind at Jutland, when two of his six ships with 2,500 men had been blown out of existence in a few moments, with that of Admiral de Robeck—an officer of the highest physical courage—but saddened and smitten to the heart by the loss of three obsolete vessels with small loss of life in the numerous fleet which he commanded. To write thus is not to justify foolhardiness or the throwing away of any advantage over the enemy. True daring in war arises from a just sense of proportion, which again can only spring from a wide comprehension.

Such is the true war spirit of the Navy, which only gradually liberated itself from the shortsighted prudent housewifery of the peace-time mind. It stirred beneath the ponderous routine of the line of battle; it sprang into action with the battle-cruisers in the North Sea, in the destroyers at Jutland and the Dover Straits, in the submarines in the Heligoland Bight and in the Sea of Marmora, in the motor-launches at Zeebrugge and Cronstadt.

* * * * *

The fact that one Admiral did not seriously attempt to force the Dardanelles when the Admiralty wished him to do so, and that the Admiralty would not allow another to try when he most earnestly desired, and the conclusions drawn therefrom throughout the Service, led us to a period of naval inertia and passivity from which there was a fearful awakening.

The entry of the Navy into the war was vehement and successful; the dash into the Heligoland Bight paralysed at the outset the German initiative; the Dogger Bank confirmed our prestige. The Germans waited solidly and passively for the

next blow; they believed that they were about to receive it at the Dardanelles; but it never came. Slowly their diligent exact minds recovered confidence; slowly they divined the infirmities and misgivings which lurked behind the overwhelming Armadas of their opponents. It was very dangerous to leave them so long to think. Not until the war had lasted thirty months was Germany in a position to begin her real submarine attack. And to that attack we nearly succumbed. It ought never to have been possible; it never would have been possible, but for the prolongation of the war. It would have been greatly diminished in intensity, in spite of the prolongation of the war, if the Germans had been continually pressed and harried by aggressive enterprise and novelty, if they had been bewildered and kept constantly in expectation. Through the greater part of 1915 peace brooded on the seas; through the greater part of 1916, apart from the Battle of Jutland, there was comparative peace. But thereafter there was a change which came near to our complete undoing.

The wonderful exertions of the British Navy to defend the life of Britain and the cause of the Allies against the 'U boats' are a history in themselves. This supreme peril united both schools of naval thought. Those who had been content to limit the part of the Navy to maintaining the blockade and keeping open the sea communications found themselves challenged and in mortal peril even in their restricted sphere. There resulted the prodigious achievement of a victory over the most intangible of foes in which the whole Navy bore its part. It ought never to have been called for.

Yet even in their extreme danger the negative school of Admirals and those who followed their advice resigned themselves to defensive measures either of an active or passive character, such as eating less bread, ploughing up the land, cutting down the forests, dispersing thousands of guns on merchant ships, building more merchant ships for submarines to sink, strewing the seas with mines, consuming hundreds of

destroyers and thousands of small craft on escort and submarine hunting. Still, even when the German Fleet was hopelessly crippled, they continued to strengthen the Grand Fleet —even when all the power of the American Navy was added to their own. And by all these means they drew upon our limited resources to such an extent that in 1918 the equivalent in men and material of fifteen or twenty divisions was denied to the hard-pressed fighting line on land: and Fisher had to coin the biting sentence, 'Can the Army win the war, before the Navy loses it?'

Nevertheless, by an enormous inroad upon our resources and an amazing exhibition of seamanship and faithful skill and courage, the British Navy eventually crushed the 'U boat.' But how narrowly and at what a cost!

It was left to Admiral Keyes to show at Zeebrugge that there were other ways of making war from the sea.

* * * * *

The end of the Dardanelles campaign closed the second great period of the struggle. There was nothing left on land now but the war of exhaustion—not only of armies but of nations. No more strategy, very little tactics; only the dull wearing down of the weaker combination by exchanging lives; only the multiplying of machinery on both sides to exchange them quicker. The continuous front now stretched not only from the Alps to the Seas, but across the Balkan Peninsula, across Palestine, across Mesopotamia. The Central Empires had successfully defended their southern flank in the Balkans and in Turkey. Their victory quelled simultaneously all likelihood of any attempt against their northern flank upon the Baltic. All such ideas had received their quietus. Good, plain, straightforward frontal attacks by valiant flesh and blood against wire and machine guns, 'killing Germans' while Germans killed Allies twice as often, calling out the men of forty, of fifty, and even of fifty-five, and the youths of eighteen,

sending the wounded soldiers back three or four times over into the shambles—such were the sole manifestations now reserved for the military art. And when at the end, three years later, the throng of uniformed functionaries who in the seclusion of their offices had complacently presided over this awful process, presented Victory to their exhausted nations, it proved only less ruinous to the victor than to the vanquished.

* * * * *

The tale is told. Yet at its conclusion we may cast back upon it one final glance. It is impossible to assemble the long chain of fatal missed chances which prevented the forcing of the Dardanelles without experiencing a sense of awe. One sees in retrospect at least a dozen situations all beyond the control of the enemy, any one of which, decided differently, would have ensured success. If we had known when it was resolved to make the naval attack that an army would be available and would be given, a surprise combined naval and military attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula would have been decided upon and backed with goodwill. If an army had never been sent, the Navy with its mine-sweeping service well organised would have resumed its efforts after the check on March 18; and had it resumed, it would soon have exhausted the ammunition in the Turkish forts and swept the minefields. Had the despatch of the 29th Division not been countermanded on February 20, or had it been packed in the transports in readiness to fight on disembarkation, Sir Ian Hamilton would have attacked the Gallipoli Peninsula almost immediately after March 18 and would, in that event, have found it ill-defended. The battles of June and July were all critical in the last degree. Any substantial addition to the attack would have been decisive. The paralysis of the Executive during the formation of the Coalition Government in May, delayed for six weeks the arrival of the British reinforcements, and enabled the Turks to double the strength of their Army. Thus the

favourable moment at the beginning of July was thrown away. The Battle of Suvla Bay in August was marked by a combination of evil happenings extraordinary among the hazards of war. The story of the IXth British Corps and of the whole Suvla landing would be incredible if it were not true. The resignation of Lord Fisher, my dismissal from the Admiralty, and the unpopularity of the Dardanelles enterprise through ignorance, intimidated our successors on the Board of Admiralty from accepting responsibility for the risks that were necessary. The refusal of the Greek alliance and army when offered in 1914; the failure to obtain that alliance and army when sought in 1915; its mad rejection by Russia; the delicate balance on which the fateful decision of Bulgaria depended; the extraordinary circumstances in Paris which led in September, 1915, to the appointment of General Sarrail and to the proposal of the French Government to send a large expedition to take possession of the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, and the reversal of this policy which offered so many prospects of success; the diversion of all the forces that became available towards the end of 1915 from the vital objective of the Dardanelles and Constantinople to the prodigal, and for nearly three years indecisive, operations from Salonika; the final decision to evacuate Gallipoli, at the time when the position of the Turkish army was most desperate and the British Navy most confident—all these are separate tragedies.

It was not ordained that the world should escape easily from Armageddon, that victory should bring triumph and profit to any of the combatants, or that old systems should endure unchastened among men.

BLACK SEA
ADRIANOPLE
Midia
Bosphorus
Chataljа
CONSTANTINOPLE
Rodosto
Tzeyli
Dedeagach
G. of Enos
Enos
Karak
Ganos
SEA OF MARMORA
G. of Ismid
Ismid
Marmora
Gulf of Xeros
Gallipoli
Injir Liman
Mudania
Panderma
Maidos
Kilid Bahr
Imbros
Seddel Bahr
Chanak
BRUSA
Kum Kale
Yeni Shehr
Lemnos
Troy
Bunarbashi
Tenedos
Lesbos
Mitylene
Gulf of Smyrna
SMYRNA
AEGEAN SEA
THE TURKISH THEATRE
26
27
28
29
42
41
40
39

MAP VII.

A GENERAL MAP
of the
THEATRE OF WAR.
AFRICA
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
FRANCE
ENGLAND
IRELAND
SCOTLAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
DENMARK
HOLLAND
BELGIUM
SWITZERLAND
GERMANY
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ITALY
BOSNIA
SERVIA
ROUMANIA
BULGARIA
TURKEY
GREECE
RUSSIA
CYPRUS
PORT SAID
ALEXANDRIA
SUEZ
JERUSALEM
PETROGRAD
MOSCOW
ARCHANGEL
STOCKHOLM
CHRISTIANIA
COPENHAGEN
HAMBURG
BERLIN
AMSTERDAM
BRUSSELS
LUXEMBURG
PARIS
LONDON
DUBLIN
WALE
MITAU
LIBAU
KONIGSBERG
VILNA
NINSK
BIELOSTOK
WARSAW
LUBLIN
DANZIG
CZERNOWITZ
VIENNA
BUDAPEST
DEBRECZEN
KOLOMOA
JASSY
ODESSA
TEHESVAR
TRIESTE
BELGRADE
NOVIBAZAR
SOFIA
ADRIANOPLE
GALLIPOLI
SMYRNA
ATHENS
TRIPOLITZA
NICE
TOULON
MADRID
LISBON
GIBRALTAR
CEUTA
TUNIS

APPENDIX I

ADMIRALTY WAR STAFF ORDERS FOR THE ATTACK UPON THE DARDANELLES, FEBRUARY, 1915

Operation Orders for Attack on Dardanelles

(Prepared by Admiralty War Staff and approved by the First Sea Lord.)

(Most Secret.)

The British force will consist of the following ships:—

Queen Elizabeth	15-inch guns.
Inflexible	12-inch guns.
Swiftsure, *Triumph*	10-inch and 7·5-inch guns.
Cornwallis, *Irresistible*	12-inch, 40 calibre guns.
Ocean, *Albion*, *Canopus*, *Vengeance*	12-inch, 35 calibre guns.
Majestic, *Prince George*, *Doris*, *Amethyst*, *Sapphire*, *Dublin*	12-inch, 35 calibre guns, 6-inch howitzers.
Blenheim, *Swanley*	Destroyer depôts.

Ark Royal, seaplane ship.
8 destroyers (*Beagle* class).
8 " (*River* class), including *Wear*.
1 yacht (in charge of trawlers).
21 mine-sweeping trawlers.
6 submarines, viz. AE 2 and 2 B class from Gibraltar, B 9, B 10, B 11.

Use of 'Queen Elizabeth.'

Queen Elizabeth has been detailed on account of her long-range 15-inch guns.

It is particularly important that her guns should not be unduly worn, nor a large quantity of her valuable ammunition expended.

She should not be risked in positions which have not been thoroughly swept free from mines.

With seamanlike precaution it is quite possible to anchor vessels in any depths which obtain in or about the Dardanelles. Given fine weather and good conditions of visibility, and the ship anchored in view of, but out of range from, the fort she is to attack, the destruction of the fort will be entailed if from five to ten of *Queen Elizabeth's* heavy shells can be dropped in it.

Very careful arrangements will be required to mark the fall of shot by means of anchored marking ships and sea-planes.

To reduce the expenditure of ammunition and wear of the 15-inch guns and obtain the greatest percentage of hits to rounds fired, salvoes should not be fired, and reduced charges should be used whenever the range of the fort's guns permits the ships to be anchored within a distance which permits of the use of reduced charges.

The problem of destroying a fort from a ship at a fixed range, at which she cannot be hit, is a different one from that of ships under way engaging each other, because time does not enter into the calculation, and the range is a fixed quantity.

If, say, five-gun salvoes are fired from the *Queen Elizabeth* it is hardly possible that more than one hit per salvo will be made (after a straddle is obtained), owing to the guns not shooting together at long range, due to the spread in elevation. Four rounds will be wasted for every hit made in addition to the rounds used before the straddle is obtained. The shell smoke and dust from the misses will render marking difficult, and more time will be required for the smoke to clear and the target to become visible.

If a single gun is used hitting should be established in four or five rounds, and a very high percentage of the subsequent rounds should be hits. Personal and other errors will also be reduced proportionately.

The 38-cm. howitzers which destroyed the Antwerp forts by indirect fire used about five rounds to establish hitting and five further rounds to destroy the fort. It is to be expected that *Queen Elizabeth*, using direct fire at older forts, will equal this performance at a fixed range if accurate marking is ensured and the greatest care and deliberation is used.

When the same conditions apply, similar methods should be followed in using the fire of the 12-inch guns in other vessels. Their ammunition is limited, though not to the same extent, and wasteful expenditure of ammunition may result in the operations having to be abandoned before a successful conclusion is arrived at.

In the case of indirect fire having to be used from ships, it is recognised that the expenditure will be considerable. For indirect fire the older ships should be preferred, if possible, to the *Queen Elizabeth*.

A base should be seized and garrisoned. Any convenient Turkish island should be selected.

The entrance forts at Cape Helles and Kum Kale should be deliberately bombarded at long range from an anchored vessel or vessels. After this, some of the older battleships should approach nearer to draw the fire of the forts and silence any remaining guns. If the fire is found to be still considerable they should withdraw, and the fort should be subjected to further deliberate long-range fire from anchored ships.

Sweeping to approach the entrance will then be necessary, and it is to be expected that the sweeping vessels will be fired at by guns placed in other positions than the forts. These will require to be dealt with by vessels covering the sweeping vessels, and, as probably no very large guns will be in other positions than the forts, 6-inch and 7·5-inch guns should be sufficient to deal with them.

As the sweeping vessels close the entrance, it is to be expected that they will come under machine-gun and infantry fire, and air reconnaissance will be advisable to locate the trenches.

The trenches and the positions of the torpedo tubes will require to be well searched with fire.

Should it not be possible to locate the torpedo tubes and destroy them by gunfire it may be necessary to land men, if the enemy's infantry can be kept at a sufficient distance by shell and machine-gun fire.

If there is any doubt as to the torpedo tubes being destroyed, it may be

possible to take ships past them by securing colliers or other merchant vessels alongside.

Vessels covering the mine-sweepers will be exposed to attack by drifting mines, especially when at anchor. Torpedo nets will be some protection against pairs of mines, connected by lines, coming alongside when the connecting rope takes across the stem.

It may be advisable to prepare buoys to be laid ahead of vessels anchoring in the Dardanelles to catch the drifting mines, and also to make use of fishing-nets between buoys to intercept mines. Concrete blocks could be used as moorings for the buoys.

Drift nets have been found efficacious in the North Sea as a means of clearing away moored mines. They are allowed to drift with the tide, and foul the mines and break them adrift.

Nets might be laid at night by shallow-draught vessels or picket boats above the minefields to drift down with the current.

There may be considerable difficulty in dealing with observation mines owing to the depths at which they may be moored.

The cables will probably have to be crept for with explosive grapnels, but it may be possible also to sweep with mine-sweeping vessels to a sufficient depth.

When the defences at the entrance are put out of action the operations will probably develop into a slow methodical progress of perhaps a mile a day, silencing fire of concealed guns and keeping down fire from trenches or machine-gun pits which will inconvenience the mine-sweepers.

It is not expected or desired that the operations should be hurried to the extent of taking large risks and courting heavy losses. The slow, relentless creeping forward of the attacking force mile by mile will tend to shake the *moral* of the garrisons of the forts at Kephez Point, Chanak, and Kilid Bahr, and will have an effect on Constantinople.

The forts at Chanak and Kilid Bahr appear to be open to bombardment by long-range direct fire from ships anchored on the European and Asiatic shores respectively, but the difficulty of ensuring accurate marking will be considerable.

Indirect fire from an anchorage off Gaba Tepe should be effective against the works on the Asiatic side, but it would appear difficult to ensure its effect against the works at Kilid Bahr. This will be apparent if the trajectory curve is plotted in relation to a vertical section of the intervening hills. But there is no reason it should not be tried, and anchorage positions may be found where the trajectory curves will have the best clearance over the intervening ridges.

The possibility of increasing the effective range of the older ships by listing them should be borne in mind. This was practised at Tsingtau recently.

H.M.S. *Triumph* took part in the reduction of Tsingtau, and the experience gained by her captain and officers should be made use of.

Two battalions of Royal Marines are being sent out to Malta under Brigadier-General Trotman. Their transports should be retained so that they can at any time be moved to the Dardanelles. They will be of service as garrison for the base or for any small landing operation of a temporary nature in circumstances where they can be efficiently protected by the guns of the Fleet against superior Turkish forces.

They should not be landed against superior forces or entrenched positions in circumstances where they cannot be efficiently supported by the ships' guns without first obtaining Admiralty sanction.

Twenty additional Maxim guns are being sent with the Royal Marine force, either for use when landed or for use in small craft to keep down rifle fire.

So far as can be ascertained, no submarines have as yet been put together at

Constantinople, but, when operations against the Dardanelles commence, it is to be expected that Germany will endeavour to either send submarines to the Mediterranean or to influence the Austrians to send them out of the Adriatic.

As a measure of precaution, submarine indicator nets are being sent out. They can be either moored or used as drift nets, and will betray the presence of a submarine to the boats watching the nets, and possibly permit of explosive charges being used to destroy her.

An arrangement is being made to establish agents in the Greek islands to watch for and report submarines or vessels supplying them, and prevent them establishing secret bases.

A number of merchant vessels have been altered to represent 'Dreadnought' battleships and cruisers, and are indistinguishable from them at 3 or 4 miles distance.

A squadron of these vessels will be sent out to Tenedos Island. They should be used with due precaution to prevent their character being discovered, and should be shown as part of the Fleet off the entrance to the Dardanelles, as if held in reserve. They may mislead the Germans as to the margin of British strength in Home Waters.

The mine-sweeping trawlers will require a depôt ship for provisions, pay, and medical attendance, and, as *Blenheim* will suffice for the destroyers, the *Swanley*, or one of the supply ships, should be used for them, unless it is preferred to attach them to the battleships as tenders.

The bombardment of the forts at the entrance need not be delayed until the arrival of all the ships, and can be commenced as ships become available.

The French Minister of Marine has been requested to provide two battleships with as many long-range guns as possible and as many small cruisers, destroyers, seaplanes, and submarines as possible, as the proportion of small ships to large ships in the British Fleet is not as large as is thought desirable.

APPENDIX II

MEMORANDUM BY MR. CHURCHILL, CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER, ON THE STATE OF THE NAVY, MAY, 1915

On the declaration of war the relative strength in Home Waters of the British Grand Fleet and the German High Sea Fleet was as follows:—

——	British.	German.
Dreadnought battleships	20	13
Dreadnought battle cruisers . . .	4	3 and *Blücher*.
Armoured cruisers.	8	6 (older).
Modern light cruisers	10	15

In addition there were the 8 *King Edwards* and 5 *Duncans* (two in dockyard hands), which gave a good predominance over the 10 *Deutschlands;* and there were on each side the older ships (ours incomparably the stronger), for which it was very difficult to find a use in the North Sea.

Included among our older ships forming the Channel Fleet were the 2 *Lord Nelsons* (because of their low speed) and 6 *Formidables*.

Looking at the relative strength of the vital units on each side, there was not much margin for mistakes or accidents. But the Fleet was, in its war station, fully concentrated with its flotillas and out of the reach of all surprise. The British ships are individually the more powerful; and with exact knowledge of the balance of force the Germans did not offer battle.

It was in this situation that the Admiralty took the responsibility for advising that none of the six regular divisions need be kept at home. The appreciations of both the British and German Admiralties on the relative strength of the Fleets at this critical moment seem to have been in agreement. All other opportunities will be less favourable to the enemy.

Since then all German ships abroad have been destroyed, and, in consequence, it has been possible greatly to reduce our foreign service squadrons. New construction has also progressed, and ships building at home for foreign countries have been purchased and completed. From these causes the British Grand Fleet has been reinforced by the following ships:—

Battleships.
Erin, Agincourt, Benbow, Emperor of India, Warspite, Queen Elizabeth.

Battle Cruisers.
Tiger, Indomitable, Indefatigable, Invincible, Australia.

Armoured Cruisers.
Defence, Warrior, Black Prince, Duke of Edinburgh, Minotaur, Hampshire, Donegal, Lancaster, Essex.

Modern Light Cruisers.
Calliope, Royalist, Phaeton, Comus, Galatea, Caroline, Cordelia, Inconstant, Penelope, Undaunted, Arethusa, Aurora, Gloucester, Yarmouth.

Flotilla Leaders.
Botha, Broke, Faulknor.
and 27 destroyers.

Against this we have lost *Audacious*. Three pre-Dreadnought battleships of the *Duncan* class, which had already for some months been detached from the Grand Fleet, have been sent to the Mediterranean, and the complements of 8 old *Edgar* cruisers, which used to form the 10th Cruiser Squadron, have turned over to 24 armed merchant cruisers and 8 armed boarding steamers.

The Harwich Striking Force has been strengthened since the beginning of the war by the light cruisers *Arethusa*, *Penelope*, *Undaunted*, and *Aurora* (mentioned above); against which we have lost *Amphion*. The flotilla leader *Tipperary* joins shortly. The number of destroyers in this force is 33, as against 36 on the outbreak of war, comprising the 'L' and 'M' flotillas, which are the latest, fastest, and most powerful vessels. In spite of losses, there are now 18 oversea submarines based on Harwich, as against 17 on the outbreak of war. In all we have at home 63 submarines.

Meanwhile the Germans have received:—

Battleships.
Markgraf, *König*, and *Grösser Kurfürst*, and probably *Kron Prinz*.

Battle Cruisers.
Derfflinger, *Lützow* (probably in June; but better assume her ready now).

Light Cruisers.
Graudenz, *Pillau*, and *Regensburg*. Second *ex* Russian (?) *Zoppot* shortly.

Probably between 10 and 20 destroyers and 8 to 10 oversea submarines (apart from an uncertain number of smaller submarines).

Against this they have lost in Home Waters (apart from losses abroad):—

Armoured Cruiser.
Blücher (almost a battle cruiser).

Modern Light Cruisers.
Magdeburg, *Köln*, and *Mainz*.

Nine or 10 destroyers and probably the same number of oversea submarines, besides older ships like the *Yorck*, *Friedrich Carl* and *Ariadne*.

Thus, taking the Grand Fleet and the Harwich Striking Force together, our strength to-day is:—

Dreadnought battleships	25 to 17
Battle cruisers (including *Lützow*)	9 to 5
Total Dreadnoughts	34 to 22

Pre-Dreadnoughts included in the Grand and High Sea Fleets—
King Edwards 8
Duncans 2
} to 10 { *Deutschlands.*

Armoured Cruisers (all obsolescent) . . 17 to 4

Modern Light Cruisers, including those attached to Squadrons and Flotillas 26
Flotilla Leaders 4
} to { German possible total of 16 modern light cruisers.

Destroyers	5 flotillas comprising 93 boats and 3 additional; total, 96.
Against, probably	8 flotillas comprising 88 boats.
" possibly	10 " " 110 "

The British total does not include 15 older destroyers attached to the Grand Fleet for subsidiary purposes, nor 25 destroyers, including 11 *Tribals*, forming the Dover Patrol, nor, of course, the Patrol Flotillas (23 destroyers) nor the Harbour Defence Flotillas (45 destroyers and 80 torpedo-boats).

The foregoing figures do not, however, give any true idea of the strength of the British Fleet, which includes 2 ships armed with 15-inch guns and 17 ships armed with 13·5-inch guns, so that the weight of metal ship for ship and squadron for squadron in the line, apart from numbers, shows an enormous preponderance. The armoured cruisers include 9 *Minotaurs* and *Natals*, which are fast and powerful ships, and are contemporaries of the *King Edwards*. All our modern light cruisers are armed with 6-inch guns; none of the Germans, except the *Pillau* (*ex*-Russian) carry anything heavier than the 4-inch. The weight of metal of our destroyers is certainly three times that of the German destroyers.

On the other hand the Germans have still in Home Waters two squadrons of very old battleships of the *Wittelsbach*, *Kaiser*, and earlier classes. We have only 3 such ships left here, the rest being in the Mediterranean. It is not easy to see what use could be made of these old German ships in a Fleet action. It is improbable that they would be brought to sea. If so, they would be the greatest impediment to the manœuvring power of the German Fleet, and the German Admiral would either have to leave them behind to be destroyed at leisure, or, by reducing his speed, allow the British Fleet to cross his **T** or otherwise engage him at a disadvantage.

Secondly, the argument of the decisive *versus* the average moment must not be overlooked. All the effective German forces must be considered available for the decisive battle, whereas our refits are continuous, and from this cause 2 or 3 Dreadnoughts and a similar proportion of cruisers and destroyers, are always absent. A further large deduction in the destroyers of the Harwich force occurs from time to time through the need to provide escorts for military purposes.

It will be seen that in all respects, actually and relatively, our position in Home Waters is better than it was at the outbreak of war, when we had full confidence in our strength and the enemy were under no delusions about it. During the next four months the repairs to *Inflexible* will be finished, and the super-Dreadnoughts *Canada*, *Barham*, *Valiant*, and *Malaya* will take their places in the line. No other German capital ship will be available in that period.

In view of these facts I believe the new Board will be able to assure my colleagues that there is no reason for anxiety about our superiority in the decisive theatre at the present time, and that the position will progressively improve.

I propose now to examine the great volume of new construction which is approaching completion. Before the end of the present year we shall receive:

Battleships of the greatest power	7
Light cruisers	12
Destroyers of the largest class and leaders	65
Oversea submarines	40
Coastal submarines	22
Monitors—	
Heavy	18
Medium	14
Light	5
Sloops and smaller anti-submarine vessels	107

Of these we shall receive in the next three months:—

Battleships	3
Light cruisers	6
Destroyers and leaders	19
Submarines	20

And all the monitors, except the four just ordered, together with a variety of miscellaneous vessels.

The most striking features are:—

First, the very large construction of destroyers, sloops, and fast small craft adapted to the purpose of submarine hunting. Of these, not less than 172 will be ready by December 31.

Secondly, the very great construction of submarines. Of the 10 submarines built by the Bethlehem Steel Works in Canada, 4 will actually be completed early in June, having been ordered in November. We have never had a submarine built under 2 years before.

Thirdly, the monitor fleet.

On the declaration of war I gave directions to take over the 3 small monitors building for Brazil, although at the time no one could see what use could be made of them. The operations on the Belgian coast in support of the left flank of the army immediately showed their value. Early in November Mr. Schwab, of the Bethlehem Steel Works, came over here in connection with the big submarine orders we were seeking to place. In conversation he mentioned to Lord Fisher and me that he had almost ready the four 14-inch gun turrets which had been ordered for the Greek battleship *Salamis* now building in Germany. I suggested to Lord Fisher that we should buy these turrets and build monitors to carry them. He took the idea up with avidity, and thereafter we embarked in the closest agreement upon a very large policy of monitor building. We took two spare 15-inch gun turrets which had been prepared for two of the furthest off new battleships (now converted into battle cruisers), and eight 12-inch gun turrets out of 4 *Majestics*, which we laid up, and with these and the American guns we armed the 14 heavy monitors, namely, 2 with two 15-inch guns, 4 with two 14-inch guns, and 8 with two 12-inch guns apiece. Lord Fisher then went on and pulled the 9·2-inch guns out of the old *Edgars* and mounted them in 14 small monitors, drawing 6 feet of water, and ten 6-inch guns, two of which had to be removed from each of the 5 *Queen Elizabeths*, owing to spray interference, were mounted in still smaller ones drawing only 4 feet. We also built 12 monitors for service on the Danube, when the Straits are forced. These are more powerful than the Austrian vessels there, and are capable of being transported by rail, and we are also building 12 monitors or river gun-boats for service on the Tigris and Euphrates. The whole of this new construction is now coming to hand. At the same time we ordered steel protected flat-bottomed boats, specially designed to hold a company each and the whole capable of landing 50,000 men simultaneously at any point which may be found subsequently convenient.

The big monitors should have a part to play in the immediate future. They were originally devised for action among the shallows in the Heligoland Bight. They are heavily armoured. They draw only 10 feet of water and can therefore proceed into water so shallow that no submarine can follow them. They are also protected against torpedoes and mines by large bulges which extend more than 15 feet away from the ship and are composed of numerous compartments, some filled with air and some with water, with a space open to the sea between the outer compartments and the ship. All the guns have been given a special elevation which enables them to fire at ranges exceeding 20,000 yards. The speed of the monitors is their weak point, slightly less than 7 knots

being realised with the first one completed at Belfast. Nine heavy monitors will be completed before the end of June, and the rest by about the end of July. The bulk of this work has been done by Harland and Wolff, and the construction of these very heavy vessels carrying the largest guns in the world in 5 or 6 months is one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of British shipbuilding. The workmen have done nobly both by their exertions and discretion. These monitors should be able to play an important part in default of all other means in the final phases of the Dardanelles operations.

There is no reason to believe that the Germans at all appreciate the extent of our preparations in this respect.

I have not dealt with the new construction maturing after December 31. It is, however, considerable.

The yards are now absolutely full with new construction, and the policy had been approved by the late Board of keeping them running at full blast by placing new orders, in addition to the above, as soon as any opening appeared.

MANNING.

The active personnel of the Fleet, which before the war was 140,000 is to-day 251,000. The arrangements for manning the new construction have been completed for more than three months ahead, the following ships being provided for in all respects:—

Now—
- *Canada* (battleship).
- *Cleopatra*, *Conquest*, *Carysfort* (light cruisers).
- *Kempenfelt*, *Tipperary*, *Lightfoot* (flotilla leaders).
- 4 12-inch monitors.
- 2 9·2-inch monitors.
- 9 sloops.
- *Marmion*, *Martial* ('M' class destroyers).
- 4 small China River gun-boats.
- 2 large submarines, 21 small submarines (up to July 31).
- 200 lighters.
- 90 flat-bottomed boats.

June, 1915—
- 2 15-inch monitors.
- 8 12-inch monitors.
- 8 9·2-inch monitors.
- 5 6-inch monitors.
- *Moon* ('M' class destroyer).
- *Medea*, *Melampus* (late Greek destroyers).
- 7 sloops.
- 50 torpedo launches.

July, 1915—
- 4 9·2-inch monitors.
- *Mandate*, *Michael* ('M' class destroyers).
- *Medusa*, *Melpomene* (late Greek destroyers).

8 sloops.
4 large China River gun-boats.
4 small China River gun-boats.
15 whalers.

August, 1915—

Barham (battleship).
Malaya (battleship).
Birkenhead (late Greek light cruiser).
Champion (light cruiser).
Marksman (flotilla leader).
Nimrod (flotilla leader).

Marigold
Milbrook
Mons
Myrtle
Morning Star
Manners
Nessus
} ('M' class destroyers).

4 large China River gun-boats.
4 small China River gun-boats.
Titania (submarine depôt ship).
1 large submarine.

All the schools and training establishments have been kept in full activity from the beginning of the war, and a regular system of withdrawing men in rotation from the Grand Fleet and other fleets and squadrons, and replacing them by boys and young seamen, has enabled good and seasoned complements to be provided for the new vessels. It would, of course, be impossible to man all these new and powerful units without paying off and laying up a number of the oldest ships. We have already, as has been seen, voluntarily laid up 4 of the *Majestics*, and a certain number of the older armoured cruisers, and before the end of the autumn it will be necessary to lay up 8 or 10 of the *Majestic* and *Canopus* battleships and the 2 remaining *Cressys*, together with 4 or 5 other vessels of similar age and obsoleteness. From this point of view the reduction of our naval strength by the loss of old vessels, provided the crews are saved, can easily be over-estimated. But for the war, they would have been out of commission already; and now they will have to pass out of the service, in any case, to meet the superior claims of vastly stronger and more useful types. This point, together with the approach of the Monitor Fleet, was an important factor in the decision to undertake operations of the nature now proceeding at the Dardanelles. Recruiting is good and active, and Vote A, which now stands at 250,000 (including about 25,000 men of the Royal Naval Division and ancillary services), will shortly have to be increased, probably to 300,000. At the present time, when, owing to the prolongation of the operations at the Dardanelles, we are holding on to almost all our old ships and at the same time receiving constant accession of new ships, the strain is at its greatest. But the needs of the next three months, both in officers and men, can be met, and thereafter considerable relief may be expected, both from the laying up of old ships and the completion of the training of large drafts.

Defence of Harbours.

Within the United Kingdom the principal harbours of strategic importance, and all naval bases, are now protected by anti-submarine booms. The effectiveness of these booms is shown by the fact that, so far as is known, no hostile

submarine has penetrated or attempted to penetrate harbours and naval bases so defended. The anti-submarine booms constructed and placed in position as defences in the United Kingdom have a total length of 49·3 sea miles. In addition there are 2 miles at Mudros Bay, Lemnos; and Gibraltar and Malta are also completed.

The system employed in many areas of submarine indicator nets, with trawlers and drifters watching them, has proved an effective deterrent to the passage of submarines, and there is reason to believe that the Germans prefer to make the enormous detour northabout rather than run the risk of passing the Dover cordon. The immunity which our transports and shipping have lately enjoyed in the Channel is largely due to the success of this system. 1,000 miles of indicator net have been ordered, of which about 700 miles have been delivered, and 75 miles have been sent to the Dardanelles, and more is to go.

Auxiliary Vessels.

A full numerical list of all vessels under the control of the Admiralty on April 19, reaching the total of 3,927, is attached. The numbers have increased since the list was completed.

List of Vessels under Admiralty Control on April 19, 1915.

Battleships	62
Battle cruisers	9
Cruisers	43
Light cruisers	64
Flotilla leaders	4
Torpedo-boat destroyers	226
Torpedo-boats	106
Submarines	71
Miscellaneous (sloops, gunboats, depôt ships, etc.)	72
Armed merchant cruisers	44
Yachts	71
Admiralty trawlers	13
Auxiliary trawlers (late fleet sweepers)	8
Fleet messengers	18
Mine-sweeping trawlers, auxiliary patrol trawlers, drifters, etc.	1,359
Paddle mine-sweepers	12
Mine carriers	7
Armed boarding steamers	23
Seaplane ships	5
Portsmouth extended defence steamers	2
Ammunition carriers	40
Store carriers	25
Frozen meat carriers	5
Squadron supply ships	15
Flotilla supply ships	5
Special service steamers	3
Accommodation ships	2
Salvage ships	1
Marconi ships	2
Colliers	467
Oilers	73
Hospital ships	11
Motor-boats	156
For military service—	
Ships for Expeditionary Force, etc.	313
Ships engaged in Colonies (about)	120

Harbour craft—	
Naval	333
Military	31
	3,821
Self-defensive merchantmen	32
Armed coasting vessels	51
	3,904
Australian fleet—	
Battle cruiser	1
Light cruisers	4
Torpedo-boat destroyers	3
Submarine	1
Miscellaneous	5
Canadian fleet—	
Cruiser	1
Light cruiser	1
Royal Indian marine vessels	7
Total	3,927

Large numbers of the smaller natures of guns, including about 70 4·7's, have been obtained from the most varied sources, some from ships operating in waters not exposed to torpedo attack, some from Japan, some from the Bethlehem Works in America, many from the Gunnery Schools, etc. The object held in view has been to arm the largest possible number of small craft employed on anti-submarine work, and also merchant ships passing through submarine-infested waters.

The following, up to the present, have been armed with guns for attack on or defence against submarines:—

Merchant steamers	190
Yachts	72
Trawlers	633
Drifters and net drifters	105

Ammunition.

On the outbreak of war the approved outfits were practically complete, and according to arrangements which had been prepared in advance large orders were automatically placed. These are now beginning to mature, the main flow beginning in August.

Since then the principle followed has been to place every possible order with the naval shell-makers that the trade can take. In consequence very large supplies of ammunition for all classes of guns will come to hand by the end of the year.

Since the beginning of the war we have received on the average four times as much heavy and twice as much medium shell as we have fired away, including all operations at the Dardanelles, and we are therefore in a substantially better position than at the outset, when the position was not unsatisfactory. This is particularly true of the Grand Fleet ships, for the bombarding operations have been almost entirely confined to the older vessels. Before the end of the year we shall receive eight times as much ammunition as we have fired away in the whole 10 months of the war, though, of course, there will be more ships to be provided for.

No apprehension is felt in regard to high explosives for naval purposes. In this matter we are in the hands of the War Office, but we have assured ourselves

repeatedly that our wants will be met. Cordite is not quite so satisfactory, and some months ago I was distressed to find that owing to the great orders of shells that had been put out in excess of any previous plan, the projectiles were, after July, getting a good deal ahead of the propellant. Mr. Balfour, at my request, very kindly held an independent inquiry into this, and made a report which is reassuring. From this it appears we began the war with 23,000 tons of cordite. Since then we have fired away 1,500 tons and have received 8,000. Before the end of the year we shall receive 13,000 tons under existing orders. This takes no account of the new Admiralty factory which is being built at Poole, or of the factory at the Firth of Forth which Lord Moulton is undertaking as an emergency matter.

Every nerve should be strained to increase the supply of naval ammunition, as the expenditure in a Fleet battle at long range may be very large. We were working up to a total of three outfits a ship; but we ought not to stop there.[1]

Torpedoes.

We are well ahead with our supply of torpedoes and shall be for 3 or 4 months to come, but so great is the volume of new construction requiring torpedoes, that our greatly expanded resources will be strained to keep pace with it towards the close of the year. The expenditure of torpedoes since the action in the Heligoland Bight late in August last has been very small from the fact that no targets are presented to our submarines or destroyers, and there is no reason to suppose that this condition will not continue.

Fuel.

The coaling arrangements of the Fleet have proved in every respect satisfactory. The supply of oil fuel, which in time of peace had excited much apprehension, and had been the object of special study, has presented no difficulty. A table showing the present consumption and position follows. A second table showing the comparison of our actual expenditure in war with the War Staff estimates prepared more than two years ago also follows.[2] It will be seen that our anticipations erred to a reasonable extent upon the side of safety. Our oil reserve now stands at nearly 1,000,000 tons, well dispersed and a large proportion kept afloat. The sea routes are perfectly safe, the prices not exorbitant, and the sources from which we can draw very numerous.

Aircraft.

The Royal Naval Air Service has expanded from 98 officers and 595 men at the beginning of the war to 895 officers and 8,039 men at the present time. This, however, includes the armoured car squadrons and the anti-aircraft defence. A paper is attached[2] showing the latest numbers and dispositions of the naval seaplanes and aeroplanes, from which it will appear that we have at present about 250 machines ready to fly. Making allowance for the loss of two a day, we shall have by September 1 about 600 aircraft, and by the end of the year about 1,200 machines of all kinds, including a number of very large ones. Extensive arrangements have been made for the supply of bombs, principally the 20 lb., 112 lb., and the 500 lb. bombs. The last-named carries a bursting charge 30 per cent. larger than that of the 15-inch shell. We have at present 178 pilots trained and 99 in training, and it has been proposed to raise these numbers by the end of the year to about 500, allowing for wastage.

W. S. C.

May 30, 1915.

[1] This was an excessive provision.

[2] Not printed.

APPENDIX III

FIRST LORD'S MINUTES

Dover Defences

January 2, 1915.

I have asked on other papers that a précis should be made of the past history since the War began of the Dover Harbour defences. Every anticipation with regard to progress has been falsified. The extent of the preparations of the ships to be sunk has been extended, and work has been pushed on very leisurely with them. Delays have been continual, and now, finally, when the *Montrose* was prepared for sinking, the opportunity of a good day was missed, and the vessel has been allowed to remain in a position where she has broken adrift and is probably on the Goodwins.[1] I cannot think that this is a creditable performance. I wish also to receive a full report of the circumstances under which the *Montrose* was allowed to remain in a dangerous position when the weather was getting continually worse, and who is responsible for it.

W. S. C.

Fleet Strength and the Manning Policy

Secretary. *January* 13, 1915.
First Sea Lord.
Chief of Staff.

A decision is required in regard to the strength of the War Fleet we should aim at for the 1st January, 1916, in order that manning arrangements may be adjusted. So far we have simply commissioned every ship we could lay our hands on, and only laid up the *Edgars*. But the great numbers of fine ships completing during the present year make it necessary that we should set a limit to the number of ships maintained in full commission, and lay up a certain number of old ships as new ones join. It is not desirable, if it can be avoided, that officers and men should be sent to sea in vessels of such low fighting quality that they are an easy prey.

The accession of twenty new cruisers between the declaration of war and the end of this year should make it possible to lay up a certain number of the oldest cruisers, particularly the 'P' class and the *Didos*. Other ships that deserve scrutiny from this point of view are, for instance:—

Sutlej, *Amphitrite*, *Europa*, *Argonaut*, *Euryalus*, *Charybdis*, *Bacchante*, *Eclipse*, *Highflyer*, *Challenger*, *Dwarf*, *Hyacinth*, *Astræa*, and *Fox*.

These vessels carry a great number of men in the highest state of efficiency. A good many of them are no doubt required for particular operations in connection with colonial expeditions and against the Turks. But we must recognise that none of them is any use against the only kind of light cruiser which the Germans would break out with, and every one of them would be an easy prey to a battle-cruiser.

The sound principle promulgated by Lord Fisher of using the fewest number of good ships to do the work on foreign stations, and of resisting a tendency to take comfort from the mere possession of numbers of unsuitable vessels, is applicable in war no less than in peace. We have also in commission forty-two armed merchant cruisers, which are much better suited to producing numerical strength than these old light cruisers. It is not suggested that any of these old ships when laid up should be dismantled. On the contrary, they should be kept

[1] She was.

with reduced nucleus crews ready for special service if required, or to replace casualties. But each should be the subject of careful examination, and a roster of withdrawals from active commission should be prepared and fitted in so as to make trained and seasoned complements, who have worked together as ships' companies, available for the splendid new vessels coming forward.

With regard to the old battleships of the *Majestic* and *Canopus* classes, of which, including the *Revenge* there are sixteen, these are required for special bombarding purposes, but they will not all be required at once, and in May or June, when the monitors arrive, at least half should be placed in reduced nucleus crews (Third Fleet scale), and kept in the highest state of readiness so as to take the places of sister ships damaged or lost in action; twelve or fifteen old ships thus placed in reserve will give us, with other increases of our personnel resources, the means of manning the new ships which are coming forward with crews of the highest efficiency.

W. S. C.

The Trench-Roller

Director of the Air Division. *January* 18, 1915.
Director of Contracts.
Third Sea Lord.

I wish the following experiment made at once:—

Two ordinary steam-rollers are to be fastened together side by side by very strong steel connections, so that they are to all intents and purposes one roller covering a breadth of at least 12 to 14 feet. If convenient, one of the back inside wheels might be removed and the other axle joined up to it. Some trenches are to be dug on the latest principles somewhere handy near London in lengths of at least 100 yards, the earth taken out of the trenches being thrown on each side, as is done in France. The roller is to be driven along these trenches, one outer rolling wheel on each side, and the inner rolling wheel just clear of the trench itself. The object is to ascertain what amount of weight is necessary in the roller to smash the trench in. For this purpose as much weight as they can possibly draw should be piled on to the steam-rollers and on the framework buckling them together. The ultimate object is to run along a line of trenches, crushing them all flat and burying the people in them.

If the experiment is successful with the steam-rollers fastened together on this improvised system, stronger and larger machines can be made with bigger driving wheels and proper protection for the complements, and the rollers of these machines will be furnished with wedge-shaped ribs or studs, which can be advanced beyond the ordinary surface of the wheel when required, in order to break the soil on each side of the trench and accentuate the rolling process.

The matter is extremely urgent, and should be pressed to the utmost. Really the only difficulty you have got to surmount is to prevent the steam-rollers from breaking apart. The simplicity of the device, if it succeeds, is its virtue. All that is required is a roller of sufficient breadth and with wheels properly fitted, and an unscaleable bullet-proof house for the crew. Three or four men would be quite enough, and as the machine is only worked by night it would not be required to stand against artillery.

In a fortnight I wish to see these trials. W. S. C.

The Manning Policy

Director of the Mobilisation Department. *February* 6, 1915.

The procedure which should be adopted in regard to manning ships like *Warspite*, *Canada*, and other new ships of the highest power, should be as follows:—

A new crew should be prepared at the depots for the oldest First Fleet battleship convenient—say, *King Edward VII*—instead of, as now, for the new ship.

When the training of this new crew is complete, they should relieve the old crew of the *King Edward VII*, and this relieved crew should go on board the new ship, plus any additions that may be required, which additions must have been carefully considered beforehand. In this way a first-class complement of active service ratings will be provided for a ship of the greatest power, with good and highly trained officers acquainted with Grand Fleet work, who know each other and have been accustomed to work together.[1]

W. S. C.

AIRSHIPS AND AEROPLANES

Secretary. *January* 18, 1915.
First Sea Lord.
Fourth Sea Lord.
Director of the Air Division.

The general condition of our airship service, and the fact that so little progress has been made by Vickers in the construction of the rigid airship now due, makes it necessary to suspend the purely experimental work in connection with airships during the war, and to concentrate our attention on the more practical aeroplane, in which we have been so successful.

1. The Director of Contracts should, in conjunction with Director of the Air Division, make proposals for suspending altogether the construction of the Vickers rigid airship. The material which has been accumulated should be stored, and the shed in which it is being constructed should be thus set free.

2. The repairing staff of the airships, which is now at Farnborough, should be moved with the utmost despatch to Barrow, and should be accommodated in the neighbourhood of the new rigid airship shed and make the shed their repairing shop. Arrangements should be made to this effect with Vickers, so that we take over this shed completely from them during the war.

3. The Farnborough sheds are to be handed back to the Army as soon as possible, thus meeting their urgent demands.

4. Messrs. Vickers are to be urged to expedite as much as possible the two non-rigid airships they are building in the old Admiralty shed at Barrow. These, when completed, will give us five airships—three Parsevals and two Astra Torres, besides the small military ones. These five airships will be accommodated, three in the wooden shed at Kingsnorth, and two in the old Admiralty shed at Barrow. The iron shed at Kingsnorth will thus become available for the large numbers of aeroplanes which are now being delivered. All necessary steps must be taken to enable aeroplanes in skilful hands to alight or ascend from the neighbourhood of Kingsnorth.

5. Temporary housing accommodation for the aeroplane staff is to be at once provided near Kingsnorth, which is to become an aeroplane as well as an airship base.

* * * * *

7. The personnel of the Royal Naval Airship Service is to be reduced to the minimum required to man and handle the five airships. The balance, including especially the younger naval officers, are to be transferred to the aeroplane section. The military officers are to remain with the airships. I am not at all convinced of the utility of keeping this detachment at Dunkirk, and unless they are able to show some good reason for their existence they should be withdrawn.

W. S. C.

AEROPLANE POLICY

Director of the Air Division. *April* 3, 1915.

1. The paper handed in by Commander Longmore should be approved in principle, and should guide us in the types of machines to be developed. The

[1] It was a great pity this system was not adopted.

Curtiss machine should be fully tested and worked up here, being replaced by other machines at Dunkirk. In particular, the following two types should be developed:—

(*a*) The heavy bomb-dropping type, capable of carrying upward of 500 lb. of explosives for a 150-mile journey there and back; and
(*b*) The superlative small fighting machine with great rising power and speed, single-seater, and with a Lewis gun firing through a deflector propeller.

2. I attach great importance to the development of photography. It is certain to be required for important reconnaissances from May onward. You must take steps to make sure that in this and in artillery spotting we are kept fully abreast of the latest Army progress. They have had more experience, and we should take every opportunity of learning from them.

3. The torpedo seaplane must be strenuously pressed forward, the object being to use at least ten machines carrying torpedoes for a night attack on German ships-of-war at anchor.[1]

4. Whenever possible all machines should be constructed so as to use their weight-carrying powers in different ways, so that, according to the service required, fuel, arms, a gun, explosives, or a passenger can be carried.

5. The object now to be aimed at from June will not be reconnaissance and patrolling, but the attacking with bombs on the largest possible scale of military points on enemy territory. For this, weight of explosives and numbers of machines are more necessary than skill of pilots or special fighting qualities in the machines. We shall by then have passed the stage of daring exploits, and must acquire the power to strike heavy blows which will produce decisive effects on the enemy's fighting strength. The carrying of two to three tons of explosives to a particular point of attack in a single night or day is the least we should aim at as an operation in the future. All possible objectives should be studied and special reports made upon them. The capacities of machines should be considered in relation to these definite tasks.

6. Every effort should be made to reach 1,000 aeroplanes and 300 seaplanes as early as possible before the end of the present year; 400 pilots will be required and all arrangements should be made to procure and train them.

7. The progress made so far, and the great expansion of the Air Service which is in progress is considered very satisfactory, and reflects great credit on all concerned.

W. S. C.

A Mining Project

Secretary.
First Sea Lord.
Chief of Staff.

January 20, 1915.

This is a proposal to lay 57 miles of mines in two or three rows at the southern end of the existing minefields, with a view to blocking the entrance to the English Channel. This would, no doubt, be an effective barrier against enemy heavy ships, but are they likely to come there? and would it not be very satisfactory to us if they did? What would they do when they got there? How would they get back? Is not the existing minefield a sufficient deterrent, having regard to the military unwisdom of the enterprise?

Against submarines, on the other hand, the minefield would be no barrier at all. Zeebrugge has already been encircled with French and British mines without preventing the submarines from going in and out with impunity. Our submarines have repeatedly traversed German minefields in the Heligoland Bight. Two of them went in through the Libau minefield. If there were good

[1] The neglect and maltreatment of this scheme was one of the great crimes of the war.

grounds for thinking that mines laid at 50 yards' interval would stop submarines the case would be made out. But these are the only craft we are likely to want to stop, and these are the very craft we cannot stop. It is a delusion to suppose we can.

2,500 mines, approximately, would be required at 50 yards' interval. It is therefore 4 or 5 to 1 in favour of the submarine—even if the field is quite intact—passing any particular line. Experience shows that the minefield will not remain intact, and that great gaps will soon be made by mines exploding in rough water or breaking adrift. Moreover, the 20-feet rise and fall of the tide renders the minefield harmless to small craft like submarines at each high water. It is no barrier—it is no deterrent. If the mines are to be placed at intervals of 25 yards the protection would be greater, but 5,000 mines would be required. That would exhaust our whole stock. To get over the tide difficulty, two, if not three, mines should be fastened on one string—i.e., 15,000 mines would be required, or three times what we have.

The objection taken by the Chief of Staff as to danger to our own ships from drifting mines and hampering our operations also seems to me very serious.

W. S. C.

Cordite

Secretary and Others. *January* 25, 1915.

The position set forth in these papers is serious, and calls for prompt action.

I understand that, since the Director of Contract's minute of the 9th January was written the War Office have written officially to say that, after careful consideration by their experts, American gun-cotton cannot be used for the manufacture of cordite, and that this affects the estimated output from Nobel's during 1915. Consequently there is very little chance of our obtaining for the Navy this year from Nobel's any part of the 1,800 tons included in the 4,000 tons that the proposals put forward in these papers were intended to provide. The net result is that of the additional 10,000 tons of cordite required for the Navy by the end of this year we are not likely to get more than 2,200 tons from three firms (Curtis & Harvey, National Explosives Company, and the Cotton and Powder Company), and then only with the assistance of Government subsidies to the extent of £275,000.

If it is the case that it is impossible for Nobel's to deliver any part of these additional requirements for the Navy during 1915, it is clearly a waste of money to subsidise the firm to the extent of the £850,000 proposed. This money could be put to better use by starting a naval factory of our own; and I wish to have proposals worked out and submitted to me with the least possible delay. The object to be attained is the establishment of an independent naval factory that will begin to produce cordite at the rate of 400 or 500 tons a month from June or July onward.

In the meantime the proposals put forward in these papers (excepting that relating to Nobel's) are approved, and every effort should be made to enable the three remaining firms to increase their estimated output.

W. S. C.

Secretary. *February* 12, 1915.
Third Sea Lord.
Director of Naval Ordnance.
Director of Contracts.

The cordite question must be grappled with with more vigour and on a larger scale. If the establishment of a factory to produce 500 tons a month is not sufficient, why is the factory not established on double or treble the scale? Whatever delays there may be in bringing deliveries into effect can certainly be overcome by the autumn of the present year. We have very large reserves of propellent at hand to last us through the earlier parts of the year, and what you

are responsible for is to make sure that we are in a position to cope with all emergencies that may arise in the latter part. Do not, therefore, hesitate to make proposals to meet the deficiency which you have shown on the current paper. Very large quantities of ammunition of all kinds and propellent will certainly be required during the closing months of this year.

Please report further.

W. S. C.

Secretary. *February* 12, 1915.
First Sea Lord.

In view of the apprehended shortage of cordite towards the end of the year, the expenditure of no less than 2,000 tons of practice ammunition should be reconsidered. It does not appear to me to be equally important that all ships should fire their full allowance. The best ships should be given the preference, and of these ships, those which have had opportunities of firing in action, whether at land or sea targets, do not surely require to repeat all their practices.

W. S. C.

Financial Procedure

Secretary. *February* 12, 1915.

This minute of the Treasury should be circulated to all departments concerned, and initialled by all Admiralty officers involved. It is of the highest importance that Admiralty contracts made during the war should, after a fair allowance for the exceptional conditions prevailing, stand the severe subsequent parliamentary scrutiny to which they will certainly be subjected.

W. S. C.

Exchange of Prisoners

Secretary. *February* 13, 1915.

The Admiralty are of opinion that an exchange of military prisoners of war, man for man, particularly officers, would be beneficial to this country.

First, because, owing to the size of our Regular Army before the war, an exchange of equal numbers secures us a return of a larger proportion of our trained fighting strength.

Secondly, as the enemy will receive an equal number of mouths to feed in exchange, the difficulties of his food problem are not lessened.

Thirdly, when a belligerent is being reduced by process of famine, it is undesirable that large bodies of prisoners of war should be in his hands, as the temptation to expose these to undue suffering is obvious.

Finally, we have more German prisoners of military age than they have of our men, and therefore when the exchanges were completed there would still remain a balance in our hands in case of exceptional action on the part of the enemy, and we should not be leaving a balance of prisoners in his hands for the treatment of whom we should have no security.

But if the principle of exchange of prisoners is to be adopted, it should be upon a regular system and on a large scale, and the pairing off of individual Admirals and Generals or of persons of distinction on either side is to be strongly deprecated as affording no real diminution of human suffering while involving unnecessary and undesirable parleyings with the enemy. These should always be kept at the minimum.

W. S. C.

Anti-Mine and Anti-Torpedo Devices

March 22, 1915.

I am sure it is perfectly easy to fit temporary wooden mine-fenders on to ships of war, and there must be many ways of doing this. All proposals, however, are always derided and broken down by the naval constructors and naval officers because it is said that they will not stand the stresses which arise in a seaway. The consequence is that, though for seven or eight months this clear

remedy has been staring us in the face, very little progress has been made and no real result achieved. Here, in the Dardanelles, the operations will take place in landlocked waters, where no violent motion can be expected, and it is to my mind most deplorable that invaluable makeshifts adapted to smooth water should have been ruled out just because perfection for ocean purposes has not been obtained. I have tried my best time after time during the last six months, and have made numbers of suggestions, and so has Sir Arthur Wilson; but the only result is that things are brought to a standstill by the sterile criticisms of persons who make no positive proposals themselves, and by general inertia. If the deep-keeled caissons which I proposed two years ago, and which were assented to six months ago, had been carried through, we should now have a certain means of passing the torpedo-tubes of the Narrows, and also a means of mooring two of them into a V-shaped shield in front of the bows of a battleship while engaged with the forts.

It is too late to do anything for the Dardanelles now. Can we not turn over a new leaf, however, in regard to the future, and make proper temporary attachments for ships which will have to work in submarine- and mine-infested areas? Never mind if this reduces the speed of the ships, or if it spoils the look of the ships, or if it cannot be used except in fine weather. It is better to have a ship which will do what you want safely in fine weather than a ship which you dare not use in any weather for necessary purposes for fear that she should be sent to the bottom. Let us now resolve that the Director of Naval Construction's proposal to fit sections of bulges around the sides of ships shall be applied without delay to at least a dozen of the older battleships, and that all the new battleships shall be fitted with the necessary rail and rack to take them, and let orders be given to prepare the necessary caissons in large numbers. Let the deep-keeled detached caissons, approved by the Treasury in November, be now proceeded with, so that they can be moored alongside bombarding ships.

Has any report been received from the *Conqueror* about the S.C.W.'s proposals? How you can be content to let these great ships, which are your pride and on which so many millions are spent, be ruled off the warpath by mine and torpedo without regarding the remedy against these dangers as the first charge on naval inventiveness, beats my civilian mind.

W. S. C.

Barrier-Breakers

Secretary and Others. *March* 22, 1915.

It appears to me that a number of tramps and old steamers should be collected at Malta without delay and filled up with barrels and wood offal, so as to render them as far as possible unsinkable, and that fourteen or fifteen of these vessels should be held in readiness to act as "barrier-breakers" when the fire of the forts at the Dardanelles has been quelled. If anything like a rush is required at the critical moment, the whole fleet of these vessels, manned by small crews of volunteers, driven on in front of the fleet and in front of the fleet sweepers, may be an indispensable precaution. Numbers will count both as offering distracting targets for the enemy and exploding more mines in the channel.

W. S. C.

Intercepting Ammunition

Director of the Intelligence Division. *March* 23, 1915.

It now becomes of the utmost importance to stop the passage of war material for Turkey through Roumania and Bulgaria. The Governments of both these countries have declared their intention of stopping it, but no doubt there is a lot of corruption among the smaller people, and smuggling under one form or another of ammunition and arms must be going on. It is essential that this should be stopped. Discuss the matter with the Foreign Office this morning, and make me proposals which commend themselves to them. Numbers of

suitable Roumanian and Bulgarian agents should be engaged by us to watch the railways and canals ceaselessly, and money should be freely spent to make it worth while for Roumanians and Bulgarians employed on the railways to give us timely information of any wagonloads of ammunition passing. With this information our Ministers can put the Governments in motion. Not a day should be lost in instituting this most necessary service.

The Smoke Flotilla

April 5, 1915.

The attached telegram should be sent to the Admiral-Superintendent, Malta. C.I.N.O. will insert full description of the method and appliances. Director of Transports will provide the vessel. Director of Stores will provide the benzol. Malta Yard will make all preparations meanwhile.

Let me have dates of sailing and arrival at Mudros, where the prepared cone-bearing ships will await her. The whole matter is most urgent.

2. A telegram should be drafted by the Chief Inspector of Naval Ordnance to the Russian Admiralty cancelling our last recommendation, and giving the details of the improved method. Let me see draft.

3. Another complete outfit of eight small vessels with three cones apiece is to be prepared for home service and for experiments, and all the necessary stores are to be purchased. Meanwhile further experiments are to continue with a view to improvements. A smoke flotilla is to be definitely constituted; an intelligent young officer to be put in charge, with the smoke vessels manned like the trawlers; the whole to be well organised and to practise making smoke. This flotilla will be stationed on the West Coast of Scotland, where it can practise in smooth waters without attracting undue attention.

4. Proposals should be also put forward for four fast motor-boats to burn one cone each, it being essential to have the power to throw smoke quickly from a particular point under fire under cover of this smoke before the slower vessels arrive to complete the obscurity.

5. Proposals are to be put forward showing what alterations would be required in four ex-coastal destroyers taken from the Nore defence to enable them to burn two cones for eight hours; the Director of Naval Construction will report on this and what time it would take to fit these vessels when the order is given.

These proposals supersede the previous proposal.

All proposals, whether for the organisation of personnel or *matériel*, to be put forward immediately. Naval Secretary to co-ordinate. Action to proceed in anticipation of further sanction.

The Armament of the Latest German Battleships

March 27, 1915.

This is a very alarmist letter, and twists all the facts into the most unfavourable position. The Commander-in-Chief assumes that six new Dreadnoughts, all armed with 15-inch guns, will have joined the German Fleet before a single British Dreadnought so armed has joined it. This is absurd. *Warspite* joins (us) in the next few days. *Lützow* has not yet joined (them). The question of the *König* class having 15-inch guns was searchingly investigated by the Admiralty Committee in October last. I have seen no evidence of these ships having been laid up since the war began for any period long enough to admit of such a change. They have been doing their practices and moving about quite regularly. The calculations of the Committee were made on the basis of 14-inch guns. If 15-inch guns were employed the weights would be much more seriously affected and the argument against their employment would become even more formidable. I do not believe there are any solid grounds for assuming that either the *Lützow* or the *König* class are armed with 15-inch

guns,[1] but in view of the evidence and this letter of the Commander-in-Chief, the Director of Naval Ordnance's Committee of October should reassemble and make a further report on the subject.

With regard to the Third Sea Lord's minute, I wish to receive a report from him and the Director of the Intelligence Division as to what is known of the possibility of completion of the *Ersatz Hertha* and Nos. 25, 26, and 28. Our own experience of the completion of ships should teach us that battleships cannot be fitted for war service, however great are the efforts made, irrespective of a certain minimum period of time. The new battleship *Kron-Prinz* may be approaching completion, but Nos. 26 and 28 cannot be in the line for many months to come.

Queen Elizabeth must sail for home the moment she can be spared. Meanwhile, no time is being lost, as until her turbine is repaired she could not in any case join the Grand Fleet. *Warspite* can join as soon as is convenient. I agree fully that *Barham*, *Valiant*, and *Malaya* should be brought forward with the utmost rapidity. It is to the gun-mountings that the delay is due. I cannot understand why a small point like this cannot be overcome. If men are taken off the turrets of later ships and set to work in three reliefs on the turrets of these ships, or if by taking special pains and care the turrets could be erected in the first instance on board the ship and not erected, taken to pieces, and re-erected, a couple of months could easily be saved. *Canada* also is a vessel very near completion, and the most strenuous efforts should be made to bring her into the line.

W. S. C.

The Search for Guns

April 3, 1915.

1. The Director of Naval Ordnance has been instructed to make proposals for increasing the number of small guns available for trawlers, drifters, and merchant ships. He is to have regard to the following sources:—

(*a*) All the guns now assigned to monitors, fleet sweepers, and river gunboats, other than the six accelerated monitors which are to be ready in May, can be appropriated. Other ships will be laid up before these latter vessels are commissioned and a further supply of 12-pdrs. will be released.

(*b*) Ships on the North American Station, which are not exposed to torpedo attack, should surrender a part of their anti-torpedo armament.

(*c*) Ships undergoing a long refit (*Drake*, *King Alfred*, *Sutlej*) should surrender on loan their suitable small guns.

(*d*) The sixteen 12-pdrs. now in the possession of the Royal Marines and formerly used by Colonel Osmaston's batteries, should be supplied with ship's mountings at the earliest possible moment and made available.

(*e*) Sixteen armed trawlers attached to the Commander-in-Chief have two guns apiece. One of these should be surrendered at once.

(*f*) The proposals in regard to the 1-inch aiming rifle put forward by the Naval Secretary at the conference on the 2d instant should be studied and immediately developed.

(*g*) A ship mounting should be designed forthwith for six and three sub-calibre guns, and trial mountings put in hand.

(*h*) The despatch of the American guns purchased at Bethlehem Works should be hastened by every means, and Sir Trevor Dawson should be instructed to search for any other guns in other American works.

(*i*) A careful scrutiny should be made of the 6- and 3-pdr. anti-aircraft guns with a view to seeing if they can be dispensed with. Some of these guns are very ineffective against aircraft, and a few 3-inch high-angle

[1] Of course they were not.

guns would be found much more effective at certain points. This, however, is the last resource.

2. Guns from the existing reserve and any obtained from the above sources will be distributed as follows:—

Fifty 12-pdrs. should go to Captain Webb for the arming of merchant steamers plying in home waters.

Half the 4·7's in reserve, together with any that can be obtained by taking one from the existing Self-Defence merchant ships, should be made available for arming ships coming home from distant voyages. The best arrangements possible should be made at London and Liverpool in regard to the 12-pdrs. at Port Said and Gibraltar, and with regard to the 4·7's, to secure, by transferring the guns to ships entering the submarine area, the greatest possible usefulness of the weapons.

All the rest of the guns are to be handed over to the Fourth Sea Lord for arming yachts, trawlers, and drifters.

Detailed proposals on both heads are to be submitted.

3. The Straits of Dover must be regarded as the main area of anti-submarine operations, and every effort must be made to render its passage by submarines difficult and dangerous. To this end, the number of armed trawlers and drifters available in the Dover patrol should be raised as speedily as possible to 100. A weekly report on the strength available should be furnished to the Board.

The indicator net defence should be carried forward on both sides to the shore, as proposed by Sir Arthur Wilson.

4. Every effort must be made to complete the cross-channel anti-submarine net. This work is of very great importance and, even if it is not wholly successful, it will be found to be a great check. The material will always be available for use elsewhere, should the tactical situation admit.

5. I am awaiting proposals for a watch being kept by our submarines on the exits from Ostend and Zeebrugge, and the proposals for laying Sir Arthur Wilson's nets in the Channel should go forward as arranged.

6. I wish to receive a report on the working of our submarine decoy and trap vessels, including the trawlers. What have they done? Where have they been working?

W. S. C.

Sunday Labour

Third Sea Lord.
Additional Civil Lord.
Financial Secretary.
Director of Works Department.

April 8, 1915.

Proposals should be submitted to me as soon as possible for the abolition of Sunday labour on Admiralty work in private shipbuilding yards throughout the country. The only exception should be urgent fleet repairs or work on vessels being specially accelerated; and with regard to these Board authority should be obtained.

Although the contractors will be thus precluded from Sunday labour, we shall not agree to the extension of the contract time for delivery, experience having shown that more work will be done without Sunday labour than with it. I do not exclude the possibility of work beginning with the night shift on Sunday night, if that is thought to be more desirable.

This matter should be settled with the utmost speed.

W. S. C.

Wireless for Submarines

April 23, 1915.

I await a special report on the fitting of oversea submarines and selected destroyers with special long-distance wireless. It is indispensable that a submarine should be able to communicate with our receiving stations when operat-

ing in the Heligoland Bight. It is also necessary that a certain number of destroyers should have the special faculty of long-distance communication in order that they may be used in connection with submarines.

The matter is urgent. W. S. C.

Mine Fenders

April 24, 1915.

This paper shows that there are now fifteen different types of bow mine-catching gear which are being experimented with in addition to the timber nose-caps and the net wings; total, seventeen. Side by side with these numerous suggestions, and after very many months' work, there is an almost total absence of definite results. I consider that concentration upon the three or four best types is now necessary. A small committee of four (consisting of the Third Sea Lord, Admiral Charlton, the Director of Naval Construction, and the Naval Secretary) should sit to review the whole subject, and should make proposals for concentration on the most promising results in the shortest possible time.

W. S. C.

Sound Signalling

Secretary. *April* 24, 1915.

First Sea Lord.

Sir Arthur Wilson.

Assistant Director of Torpedoes.

. . . The system of sound signalling, enabling one submarine to communicate with another, has been toyed with for a long time, and it is necessary now to produce practical results, even if of a crude and imperfect character, which can be made rapidly effective. A report should be furnished within three days, stating what is possible and making proposals for action.

Aerial Photography

The Director of the Air Division. *April* 24, 1915.

What are you doing about photography from aeroplanes? I am informed that you have only got one officer actively engaged in this, and that no satisfactory photographs have yet been taken by the Naval Wing. This matter is of great importance and urgency. After the assistance which we have given to the Army in the matter of aeroplanes, we may expect from them every possible aid in repairing our deficiencies in this branch of aerial work. Pray see General Henderson yourself without delay, and make sure that we are in a position, either by borrowing a couple of cameras or photographers from the Army or by any other method which is effective, to take the photographs required any day after the 1st May. Report to me that this will be done.

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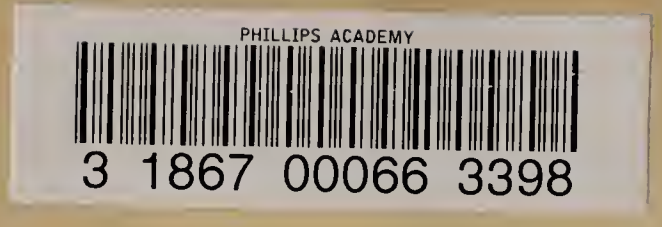
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